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The Good, the Bad, and the Gypsy:

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Constant positive representation and use of reversed negative stereotypes as 'sympathy triggers' in Gypsy cinema

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Abstract

The Good, the Bad, and the Gypsy: Constant positive representation and use of reversed negative stereotypes as 'sympathy triggers' in Gypsy cinema

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Gypsies or Roma are one of the minorities frequently represented in film, whenever we talk about European or American film; within this context Russian and Eastern European cinema seems to offer the richest palette of portrayals, as in this region Roma represent an important and controversial minority. Film scholars agreed that from the moment when Roma appeared on screen and until the last decades when a shift toward a more realistic approach can be detected, their filmic representations were predominantly stereotypic and highly exoticized. Films from the last decades show more interest in the depiction of poverty, discrimination and marginalization, but stereotypical representation is still present and dominant. The purpose of this paper is to focus on several stereotypes generally perceived as negative stereotypes (theft, drunkenness, vulgar language, falseness, etc.) and to demonstrate that in relation to Gypsy

representations on screen, these stereotypes change their function, trying to inculcate upon the viewer sympathetic feelings and accentuating the gap between the Roma cinematic image and the dominant ideology about them in the societies where they live. This thesis will examine negative stereotypes and their function in some of the most representative films of the Gypsy cinema: *Skupljaci perja / I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (Petrović 1967*)*, *Tabor ukhodit v Nebo/ Gypsy Camp Goes to Heaven or Queen of the Gypsies* (Loteanu 1976), *Ko to tamo peva? / Who's Singin' Over There?* (Sijan 1980), *Dom za vesanje / Time of the Gypsies Gypsies* (Kusturica 1988), *Gadjo Dillo / The Crazy Stranger* (Gatlif 1997), *Dallas Pashamende / Dallas among Us (Pejo 2005)*, and *Baklava* (Petrov 2007). Special attention will be paid to the relationship between the subjects of representation (Roma), their authors (the directors), and their consumers (the viewers).

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Chapter 1: Pro Forma

Gypsy Cinema in the Context of Russian and Eastern European Cinema

In Russia and Eastern Europe film is still treated as a medium of secondary importance to literature within the discipline of cultural studies. Yet, it is often the moving image rather than the printed word that are more integral to our everyday experiences and carries more persuasive weight in today's world of electronic media, and especially young people are frequently more familiar with the cinema of a given area than they are with its literary heritage (Iordanova 2003, Acland and Wasson 2011). This is even more relevant in the case of Roma minority since their history and culture is little known and circulated (Liégeois 1986). Similar to other ethnic communities, Roma are scattered throughout Eastern Europe, without belonging to any 'nation state', but unlike other minority groups from the same category, they have been the subject of sustained cinematic interest (Iordanova 2001). Films featuring Roma protagonists have been made in every country of the region, and Gypsy subplots are also a common thread. For example, Roma women emerge as passionately romantic heroines in early Yugoslav features such as *Sofka / Impure Blood* (Novakovic 1948), *Anikina vremena / Anika's Times* (Pogacic 1954), *Ciganka / A gypsy* (Nanovic 1953), and *Hanka* (Vorkapich 1955). Yugoslav cinema also produced some of the most representative films for the Gypsy cinema: *Skupljaci perja / I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (Petrović 1967), *Ko to tamo peva? / Who's Singin' Over There?* (Sijan 1980), and Emir Kusturica's *Crna macka, beli macor / Black Cat, White Cat* (1998) *and Dom za vesanje / Time of the Gypsies* (1988). We have Roma protagonists in the Hungarian cinema - *Romani kris – Cigánytörvény (Bence 1997)*, Greek cinema - *Laterna ftoheia kai filotimo / Barrel – Organ, Poverty, Dignity*

(Sakellarios 1955), Czech and Slovak cinema – segment *Romance / Romance in Perlicky na dne / Pearls of the Deep* (Chytilova et al. 1966) and *Cigan / Gypsy* (Sulik 2011), and these are just a few examples. In addition, it should be pointed out that there is a highly exoticized Roma presence in the cinema of the former Soviet Union in films such as *Tabor ukhodit v Nebo/ Gypsy Camp Goes to Heaven or Queen of the Gypsies (Loteanu 1976)* (Iordanova 2001), while in countries such as Romania and Bulgaria, where the Roma minority is very numerous and the relations with the dominant group are very problematic, Roma are not very visible in film. The exceptions are few and include the Bulgarian films *Chernata Lyastovitza / The Black Swallow* (Djulgerov 1997), and *Baklava* (Petrov 2007), while Romania is represented by such films as *Furia / Fury* (Muntean 2002), and *Gadjo Dillo / The Crazy Stranger* (Gatlif 1997); even more intriguing is that most of these films are either co-productions or the works of directors who have emigrated to the West. This is the case with Tony Gatlif, a Western director of Roma and Algerian origin, whose films are directly or indirectly linked to Roma and minority issues, some of them depicting Eastern European Roma and featuring artists / actors from this area – *Transylvania* (2006), *Gadjo Dillo / The Crazy Stranger* (Gatlif 1997).

If we look at the Gypsy cinema from a historical point of view, it is clear that it followed the same more broadly tendencies existing in Eastern European cinema. After WWII film industries were nationalized and from the 1950s what was happening in the politics and culture of the region closely mirrored the situation in the Soviet Union (Iordanova 2003). No major influences on Roma representation can be detected during this period. Their image is highly stereotypical and exoticised, close to analogous representations in the West, consisting of portrayals of savage, happy Gypsies, deeply rooted in their traditional way of life and offering a catchy visual spectacle (Trumpener

1992). In the 1960s, the region experienced a 'new-wave' of film-making, encouraged by reform-oriented domestic political developments, and influenced by Western experimentation with narrative and style (Iordanova 2003). A new generation of more liberal minded film-makers arose and grouped themselves in several cinematic movements generally known under the blanket term of new wave of the 60's. Yugoslav Black-Wave and the Czechoslovak New-Wave, both asserting a non-traditional approach to filmmaking, are the most famous cases. The first of these groups created films with a dark sense of humor and a critical view of society at that time (Goulding 2002). A more authentic depiction of Roma originates in this new approach and Aleksandar Petrovic's *Skupljaci perja / I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967) is probably the best example. The second group, the Czechoslovak New Wave, was called a film miracle and was distinguished by its use of long unscripted dialogues, dark and absurd humor, and the casting of non-professional actors (Cook 1990). *Perlicky na dne / Pearls of the Deep* (Chytilova et al. 1966), was considered the manifesto of the movement and one of its segments is relevant to Roma representation. The 1970s is a period of consolidation which culminated in the cinema of moral concern and committed political film-making at the end of the decade (Iordanova 2003) and brings no major changes to Roma representation. The 1980s are the last years of the socialism, ultimately marked by turmoil and growing political discontent, as well as political film-making inspired by the Soviet policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring), both of which are slightly detectable in films like *Ko to tamo peva? / Who's Singin' Over There?* (Sijan 1980), and *Dom za vesanje / Time of the Gypsies* (Kusturica 1988). For the communist regimes, the Roma were potentially dangerous as a community that constantly defied the authorities. Their unique way of life and their culture represented an open affront to a system whose goal was to standardize the entire society, therefore films depicting the

outrageous Gypsy way of life were only occasional shown and often criticized or tendentiously judged (Stojanova and Lavoie 1998). A major change was brought by the 1990s that can briefly be described as the period of post-Communist transition and transformation. During communism, Roma were severely persecuted by the authorities in countries such as Romania, Bulgaria or Czechoslovakia, but the society as a whole was quite indifferent to them. The fall of the communism revealed a different attitude on the part of East / Central European societies towards Roma: one of hate and deep contempt (Stojanova and Lavoie 1998). Roma became a favorite topic of the news and soon enough their presence in films increased significantly. Factors like the post-communist large scale migrations, the poor living standards, massive unemployment and an increased crime rate, the perpetuation of discriminatory measures, the growing anti-Romani sentiments and the violent attacks, as well as the fact that no nation or authority acts as an advocate for this ethnic group, all influenced the way Roma are portrayed in cinema and most of the films made in the 1990s and 2000s cannot be considered independently of this socio-political context (Iordanova 2001).

The Specific of Russian and Eastern European Gypsy Cinema

A crucial precondition central to any discussion of Russian and Eastern European Gypsy cinema is the fact that rather than being given chance to portray themselves, the Roma people have usually been depicted by others (Iordanova 2003, Glajar and Radulescu 2008).

Therefore, even film-makers sincerely concerned with the Roma predicament chose to exploit the visual richness of their non-conventional life styles and to use recurring narrative tropes. According to Dina Iordanova, virtually every 'Gypsy' film

from the region has relied on at least several of these motifs: passionate and self-destructive infatuations (often accompanied by suitably passionate Gypsy music); 'fest in time of plague' attitude (visually enhanced by scenes of dancing); astonishingly mature and strong-willed street-wise protagonists; complex patriarchal power structures within extended families; mistrust of outsiders (gadjos); coerced urbanization, forced integration and imposed renouncement of semi-nomadic lifestyles (2003).

As a consequence, it is no surprise that Roma representation in cinema has repeatedly raised questions not only of authenticity versus stylization, but also of patronizing and exoticising. Recently two leading trends became noticeable, which Dina Iordanova calls 'correcting the record', and 'celebrating the non-conventional'. The first trend refers to the attempt of documentary and feature films to counter media vilification and show the real social problems that Roma face, while the second trend reflects a tendency to glorify the free-spirited, non-conventional lifestyle of the Roma (Iordanova 2001). Generally these two tendencies - social concern and exoticism – coexist, therefore Gypsy cinema of this period is a mix of romanticism and neorealism. This unique combination can be explained and better understood in the context of a broader Eastern preoccupation with marginality (Iordanova 2003, Živković 1998), to which I will refer in greater detail in the following chapter.

Another distinctive feature of Gypsy cinema from the region is that even if there are many films featuring Roma, only a small number of those explore the troubled relationship between the dominant ethnic group and the minority. In only a few cases the mechanisms of inter-ethnic interaction become the center of attention, and as a rule these films examine the limited sphere of singular personal relationships as if to suggest that what is happening is a mere accident or a departure from the norm. Being a version of inter-racial romance narratives, these films generally present the story of a Roma girl and

a boy from the dominant group (or vice versa) whose spontaneous and flaming love relationship quickly gains mainstream disapproval and has to stop (Iordanova 2003).

The Thesis Questions

There are two main questions that this thesis attempts to address and discuss as the films are analyzed: why there is such a big discrepancy between the perception of Roma in everyday life and their representation on screen and how did this cinematic representation evolved over time?

Besides the identification of possible causes for Roma representation in film and the determination of how, if at all, Roma representation changed and in which direction, there are several related questions that can be posed as corollaries of the main questions.

Is the gap between perception and screen image deeply rooted in the traditional, stereotypical approaching of the image of Roma in cinema? If this is the case, why is this approaching so persistent? What do the changes in representation say about the society that produced them? Linking the cultural changes to the films can reveal a lot about cinema itself, the people that made them and the expectations of a society at a given moment. Therefore, who does this cinema represent? Which segments of the public are addressing and what are the mechanisms involved in the process?

Concept of the Study and Methodology

The goal of my research is to demonstrate that Roma are in general positively portrayed in Eastern European cinema. Even if they are frequently shown doing things which are deemed socially unacceptable, it is also clear they do not have the option to act

in a different way. More than that, I claim that we assist to a particular process of representation, involving a shift in the traditional functions of stereotypes. More precisely, what is usually perceived as a negative feature in association with a film character (hard drinking, stealing, beating etc.) becomes a positive feature or at least sympathy trigger in association with Roma on screen. Most of the scholars agree that Roma were intensively exoticised and stereotyped in cinema, even when the directors' intention was to offer a realistic and unbiased portrayal of this minority (Iordanova 2001, 2003, 2008, Stojanova and Lavoie 1998, Zanger 2003, Živković 1998, Pasqualino 2008, Gabor 2003); nevertheless, the presence of what I call *reversed stereotypes* was understudied, although I consider it an important aspect of Roma representation. Reversed stereotypes can be defined as those stereotypes categorized as negative or positive, which can be intentionally used in film with the purpose of obtaining the opposite effect. They are a key element in Roma representation in general and play a decisive role in the perpetuation of unauthenticity in Gypsy cinema because they color, but at the same time they taint the portrayal of Roma in feature films.

After an introduction to the main features of Gypsy cinema, to the purpose of this thesis, and a clarification of key terms and denominations, the second chapter, *Review of Literature*, will examine from a historical point of view the production of Gypsy films in the countries of Eastern Europe within the framework of their national cinema traditions, and particularly in their relation to state ideology.

The methodology that I use for this thesis in order to achieve my purpose is content analyses performed on seven films that cover a range of years from 1966 to 2011, to monitor the changes in certain key aspects of exoticization and stereotypical representation. The key factors revolves around the plot, characters, and depiction of a series of situations normally perceived as having negative connotations but susceptible to

change given the right context. The first frame will focus on the plot and the main characters; it is going to look at their personalities and see how they are portrayed, at character flaws and the perception of good and evil. The second frame is going to look at the main characters involved in stereotypical situations if these situations are present in the film (heavy drinking, stealing, violence within the members of the same group, gambling and cheating, quarreling, destructive and obsessive romance). The final frame will examine the whole film and assess whether film's content has changed in comparison to the others.

Definition of Key Terms and Denomination

1.1 *Stereotype*

Since *stereotype* / *stereotypical situation* are one of the basic units of analysis in this paper, a few clarifications are necessary. The study of stereotypes began in the 1920s with Walter Lippmann (1946), but major developments of stereotype theory occurred no sooner than the 1960s, perhaps influenced by the social transformations occurring all over the world at that time. Ashmore and Del Boca define a stereotype as "a set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a social group" (1981, p.16). There are three orientations within stereotype theory: sociocultural, psychodynamic, and cognitive. The sociocultural orientation, which is also the most relevant for my paper suggests that the main function of the stereotypes is to facilitate the manifestation of cultural values and to specify the nature of various social groups. In this functionalist view, stereotypes support norms about how these groups and individual group members are expected to behave and how they should be treated.

In Andre W. M. Gerrits's treatment of the subject, stereotypes play a crucial role in the process of identification with one group or another:

> "National images or stereotypes are generalizations, broad conclusions on the features of both one's 'own' group and on the 'other'. They may sometimes be merely a projection of the characteristics of a prominent individual or (part of) the ruling elite on the 'other' group as a whole, or the generalization on a 'national' scale of private beliefs about this 'other' group by opinion makers within one's 'own' group. In other words, images of a given social group do not necessarily reflect those of the rest of society. Moreover, researchers on national images and stereotypes would no doubt agree that the 'symbolic reality' of 'others' is often immediately linked to the image of one's 'own' group, to auto-images or stereotypes". (1995, p.2)

Automaticity Theory developed by Posner & Snyder (1975, 2004) and refined by Bargh (1989, 1997), postulates that stereotypes have all the ingredients of an automatic process. A stereotype, once it is formed, is automatically activated when the stimulus is present. Since stereotypes are "exaggerated, simplified and lasting, and are largely resistant to modification and nuance" (Gerrits 1995 p.2), people may not have the intention to stereotype, but their mind is set to do it. The default process can be adjusted or corrected "in a second effortful processing stage – only if the person has the time, attentional capacity and interest in doing so" (Higgins and Kruglanski 2000, p.73).

According to Karl Erjavec stereotypes are inevitably inaccurate, which is not to say that they have no relationship whatsoever to reality. Whether based on direct personal experience or not, images and stereotypes contain elements of fantasy and reality and the latter may be tendentiously interpreted, malevolently generalized and falsely exploited, without denying their initial validity. Also, stereotypes are not immutable or inevitably one-dimensional. They can be positive, negative, or neutral, and they may change in the course of time. Their function may fluctuate and they are probably too obstinate and persistent to simply appear and disappear altogether (2001).

Despite some positive stereotypes (e.g. Gypsies have a natural talent for music), the stereotypes about Gypsies are overwhelmingly negative, with consistent nuances from one country to another, depending on the social contexts (Gabor 2003).

Ian Hancock (1991) identified a few negative stereotypes used in 19th and 20th century American media, such as baby theft, stealing, carefree wandering etc.; some of them are still active in Europe today—Gypsy men as sexual threat to non-Gypsy women, and lack of political and religious causes (Barany 2002, Erjavec 2001, Fawn 2001). On the other side, Fraser (1992), Crowe (1991, 1994), Barany (2002), Gabor (2003) and Stewart (1997) studied Roma and made significant remarks on the stereotypes that the Gypsies have developed about the outsiders or gadje (seen negatively as oppressive, domineering, source of trouble, easy victims of Gypsy cunning, impure, or sometimes positively as trustworthy).

I have approached this study with the assumption that stereotyping is a tool used in the film world and in mass media in general to provide a set of symbols that culturally diverse audiences could comprehend (Hayward 1996). Through the use of conventions and stereotypes, films can be understood and appreciated not only by the audience of one country or community, but also by audiences in other countries. At the same time, stereotyping seems hardly avoidable, since the narrative process usually involves a process of selection, simplification and codification (Gabor 2003).

1.2 *Eastern European Cinema*

A second clarification is needed for a better understanding of what exactly I mean by *Eastern European Cinema*.

In the 1970s, and particularly in the 1980s, the idea of "Central Europe" gained wide currency among the intellectuals of the region. Besides strengthening the regionalist vision, the concept of "Central Europe" stressed the distinction of these cultural traditions from the imposed Soviet domination and cultural Russification. In addition, this categorization allowed a demarcation line to be drawn between the Central European and the Balkan countries, both part of the Soviet sphere of influence at that time (Todorova 1997, Iordanova 2001). In fact, it was a concept that asserted the region's cultural belonging to the West European tradition. Therefore, throughout the '70's and the '80s, East Central Europe was to be conceptualized as "a region that fitted culturally within the West but was still colonized by barbarian Eastern powers, as a region that longed for democracy yet had to endure tyrannical Communism" (Iordanova 2003 p. 11).

If cinema is studied as part of the national cultural tradition, the national approach is justified and necessary. But, the countries in the region have an extensive shared history and the similarities in their social, political, economic, and cultural background prevail over the differences (in language, ethnicity, and religion). Throughout the second half of the twentieth century these cultures were confined to the Eastern Bloc. They shared common values and traditions in literature, fine and performing arts, as well as in the wider tradition of the role of critical and diasporic intelligentsia within public discourse. For the long and gray years of Communist rule, intellectuals from the region were reading each other's novels and watching each other's plays and films with interest. As far as cinema is concerned, in the context of regional cycles and regionalism (vs.

national consolidation) we can trace shared features in several important areas, such as: industrially, thematically, stylistically, and geopolitically (Iordanova 2003).

The end of the Cold War seemed to suggest that Eastern Europe had ceased to exist. The rush for emancipation from the oppressive policies of the Soviet sphere and the turn westwards was often supplemented by the assumption of a sycophant role in the "new Europe" that easily translated into the culturist terms of 'kinship' and 'civilization' (Huntington 1993), which in this particular case was closely related to the virtual re-construction of the former imperial spheres of influence: Habsburg and Ottoman.

The old eastern Bloc underwent a process of dissolution into two general areas, East Central Europe and the Balkans. The newly consolidated concept of Balkan cinema (including the cinemas of former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, as well as Greece and sometimes Turkey) was juxtaposed to the concept of East Central European cinema, which now includes the film histories of Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (but, paradoxically, not that of East Germany).

Nevertheless, this study generally refers to Eastern Europe in the sense conferred by the existence of the Eastern Bloc, containing both East Central Europe and the Balkans, due to similarities existing in the cinemas of the region.

Iordanova argues that the West won the propaganda battle over the hearts and minds of the people from the Eastern Bloc, but the culture of the East remains as little known in the West as before. The resulting situation is that more than a decade into the

post-1989 transition many of the Cold War-era clichés about Eastern culture and cinema remain unchallenged in the wider context of post-Soviet area studies (2003).

My impression is that the situation has substantially improved in recent years. Further, in a future chapter, I will discuss the use of Gypsy cinema as part of a strategy targeting Western audiences, with questionable results. But what seems to turn into reality is that Eastern cinema became more visible at the most prestigious film festivals from the Western Europe and, consequently, on the big screens of cinemas around Europe, Russian and Romanian cinema being perfect examples in this respect.

1.3 *Gypsy Cinema*

In the recent years the term of Gypsy has been repeatedly rejected by many as an eroticizing and derogatory term reflecting the oppressive views and practices of the dominant population; instead, the term Roma was suggested as reflecting the rich heritage and cultural dignity of a persecuted, but also resistant people (Gay y Blasco 2008). The word *Rom* means *man* in the Romani language that has Indic roots. *Romani* is the adjective of the noun Roma, as in Romani traditions and is often problematically confounded with the adjective *Romanian*, which refers to Romania, the Eastern European country inhabited by Romanians who chose this name for their country in the 19th century in order to underscore their Latin ancestry (Gabor 2003). Another word often encountered in both films and everyday-life is *gadje* which in the Romani language means non-Gypsy and it is usually used to designate the outsiders.

Nevertheless, it has become quite common to use the term Gypsy when referring to exotic, Orientalizing, and stereotyped representations in art, while the term Roma is preferred to designate the real people which identify themselves as members of the Roma community.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The Birth of Gypsy Cinema and the First Years of Communism

For a long time Roma peoples, an old and constant presence in Europe, have not been primary targets in film; nevertheless, entertainment films, aimed at the general public, contained many and recurrent clichés about Roma, bearing witness to a constant swing of opinion from curiosity and fascination to mistrust and repulsion. Roma culture is perceived as a repository of picturesque, colorful folklore; therefore numerous European films refer to Roma abilities as musicians and entertainers and incorporate since the early phases of cinema “Gypsy” cabaret scenes, dances or circus shows (Chansel 2009).

According to Nikolina Ivantcheva Dobreva (2009), in the 19th century, Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris,* Mérimée's *Carmen,* and Pushkin's *The Gypsies* were critical to the establishment of the image of the "Gypsy" as a traveling dancer, and as part of an interethnic romantic triangle. This image evolved in early cinematic adaptations of these texts, particularly through interpretations of the "Gypsy" embodied by the Hollywood star system in the 1930s and 1940s, including performances by Rita Hayworth – *The Loves of Carmen* (Vidor 1948), Marlene Dietrich – *Golden Earrings* (Leisen 1947), and Orson Welles – *Black Magic* (Ratoff and Welles 1949), or Bela Lugosi – *Wolf Man* (Waggner 1941), that set the pattern for later portrayals. Although

such performances and ideological constructs were denounced by Cold-War-era Communist ideology, they were nonetheless reproduced in Eastern European cinematic variants, and became particularly prominent in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

An early Gypsy movie, which is also the first Soviet fiction movie about Russian Roma, *Posledniy tabor* / *The Last Camp* appeared in 1936, being directed by Jewish filmmakers Moisei Goldblat and Yevgeni Shneider (Goldblat and Schneider 1936). The film was announced as 'a lyrical saga of people forever searching a dream of happiness' and was a typical example of Soviet collectivization propaganda. It also demonstrates the manner in which the State was attempting to extend its control over the population by subordinating the quintessential symbol of freedom – the Gypsy – to the larger project of national consolidation. The story opens with the arrival of a Romani caravan at a Russian kolkhoz. The farmers decide it would be a good idea to put the horses of the Gypsy vagabonds to work. At first the Gypsies are not particularly happy about committing to build the bright communist future, but soon thereafter they suddenly feel a strong attraction to the perspective of working together with the Russian collective farmers. Later they are portrayed enthusiastically cultivating the land and in the evening they throw themselves into singing and dancing around campfires. It is worth mentioning that the Roma in this movie were played by professional actors from the world's first Romani language theatre Romen which had opened in Moscow in 1931 (Chiline 2003).

The end of World War II found the Roma communities scattered throughout Europe, weakened and suffering. It is estimated that between 250,000 and 1.5 million Roma perished in *O Baro Porrajmos*, which literally translates as the 'great devouring'. They were exterminated because of their ethnicity, perception of racial inferiority, and not because they were asocial or different (McGarry 2010). The genocide of Roma received almost no attention in the aftermath of the defeat of Germany in 1945. The Nurenberg trials were silent as regards the fate of Roma due to the lack of written evidences compared with the impressive documentation on the "Final Solution of the Jews". The deaths suffered by Roma were not denied but considered a "crime against humanity" and it was only in 1962 when a Nazi was judged for crimes against this minority (McGarry 2010, Hancock 1991). Therefore, at the end of the Second World War, Roma entered once again in a shadow zone.

The 1950s saw the nationalization of cinema(s) in Eastern Europe, meaning that cinema was financed and controlled ideologically by the Communist state. What was happening in the politics and culture of the region closely mirrored the situation in the Soviet Union, therefore the cinemas from the region display a common range of themes, aesthetics and genres pre-determined by the shared post-war political constraints (Iordanova 2003).

The late 1940s and early 1950s, were the golden era of Socialist Realism when an impressive number of ideological dramas were produced. The Socialist Realist doctrine was a set of guidelines on style and content mostly concerned with the narrative arts

(Cook 1990). Elements had been launched as early as 1934, and its main proponent, Stalin's cultural policy advisor Andrei Zhdanov, had been particularly strict in applying the rules to the Soviet intelligentsia over the following two decades (Iordanova 2003). Zhdanov started by criticizing theatre repertoires for showing Soviet people as "ugly caricatures " "lacking cultural education", while villains appeared as strong and powerful in new plays (Central Committee Resolution, 26 August 1946). Jazz music followed in the firing line of ideology, when it was classified as "hysterical" and "cacophonous"; as for film, Zhdanov considered that it did not reflect fully the role of the Party, paying instead exaggerate attention to private, everyday life (Beumers 2009).

At the time of the creation of the Eastern Bloc after the Second World War, the strictures of the Socialist Realism were transferred to the East European region and were used as guidelines for cultural policies. Socialist Realism was supposed to be the "basic method" of arts and literature (Keylor 2009) and best-suited to cater for the revolutionary masses in their endeavor to build a bright future of socialism (Cook 1990). Films were considered to supersede events and provide the historic narrative of the future; in this context, the realistic manner of cinema of the period assists the illusion, but also makes the film dull and flat (Beumers 2009). The Socialist Realism's demands were the suppression of 'formalism' and all experimentation with the art form and commitment to 'realist' content; an outspoken commitment to the cause of building socialism and communism; the presence of a strong hero, a member of the working class, who promotes the party line; and a plot developing in the cannon of 'historical optimism' (occasionally

expressed with the concept of 'revolutionary romanticism'), namely one that keeps in view the ultimate triumph of the socialist idea – no matter what tremendous difficulties the hero may encounter in the course of his struggle to build bright socialist future, this future should never disappear from sight, thus determining all outcomes in a historically optimist framework (Iordanova 2003).

There was little room for Roma in film during this period. There was no interest in discussing or emphasizing the diversity among communist peoples since everybody should engage in one mission, namely the building of the golden socialism. Besides that, the Roma hero with his distinctive occupations, love of nomadism, and non-conformist attitude didn't quite fit within the pattern of the Communist hero.

Secondary Roma characters appear nonetheless in some entertainment productions, but especially in cinematic adaptations of literary works.

One of these screen adaptations is *Sofka / Impure Blood* (Novakovic 1948) – one of the first (if not the first) postwar Yugoslav film that is not focused on the communist partisans. The film is based on a classic novel of Serbian realism, written by Boris Stanković and is notable for its portrayal of Serbian society immediately after Ottoman rule, and the language, customs and clothing all tell of a society making a journey from "Oriental" to European customs (Goulding 2002). Another example is *Anikina Vremena / Legends of Anika* (Pogacic 1954), a drama based on the same titled short novel signed by Ivo Andrić and telling the story of an unhappy self –willed woman, who repeatedly defies the conventions and brings dissension through the unpredictable distribution of her

favors. The film was a Cannes Grand Prize winner and the first Yugoslav film released in United States (1956).

The 60's and the Non-traditional Approaching to Filmmaking

The Eastern European public's first encounter with well-defined Roma characters and plots dealing in depth with the life in Roma communities coincide with the non-traditional approaching to filmmaking that reside in the 60's.

In the late 1950s, a number of socially conscious films reflecting the spirit of the 'Thaw' in politics were made. The Thaw revived the cinema of the region: comedies could be made once again and films could turn the hero back into an individual human being, placing humanist values before ideological ones. The Thaw also had positive effects on cultural life: publication of works which were critical of Soviet society, opening of new theaters and modern art exhibitions, establishing cultural exchanges (Beumers 2009).

In this climate in the 1960s, the region experienced a 'new-wave' of film-making, encouraged by reform-oriented domestic political developments, and influenced by Western experimentation with narrative and style (Cook 1990). Realist drama, historical epic and comedy took leading positions, and films concerned with the Holocaust, the destruction of traditional village lifestyles and urbanization occupied a specific place in Russian and Eastern European cinema (Iordanova 2003).

Many of the directors who worked in Czechoslovakia during this period were involved in the new wave movement in one way or another. Although it is difficult to strictly define who "belongs" to the group and who does not (Iordanova 2003), a film directed by several FAMU (The Film and Television School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague) graduates in 1965, *Perličky na dně / Pearls of the Deep* is unanimously considered to be a manifesto of the movement. It is not merely a coincidence that one of the film's segments (*Romance*, Jaromil Jires) focuses on the love story between a "gadjo" and a Roma girl, but a sign that the director were ready to approach in a stylistically and conceptually different manner the Roma theme.

According to Dina Iordanova (2003), the most specific manifestation of the Czechoslovak New Wave style can be reduced to an idiosyncratic combination of several topics (often tackled with documentary authenticity), the subtle humor (often bordering on the absurd and having an emotional cohesive power), the use of Avant-garde narrative and editing techniques, and the attention to psychological detail (often better revealed in explorations of interactions within a group rather than in studies of individual protagonists).

In the context of the discourse on modernity and patriarchal society, an important trend became noticeable in Eastern European cinema during the 60's and later in the 70's: the exploration of the relationship between the urban (associated with modernity) and the rural (associated with patriarchy) (Beumers 2009). Therefore one could see numerous films that represented the village as an idyllic sphere where community life is preserved,

but also films that offered serious critique of the stubborn residues of a paternalistic system, and some of the most interesting films presented the village as a bewildering and self-contained parallel world, without many communicative exchanges with the outside (Cook 1990, Iordanova 2003).

In another part of the region, Yugoslavia achieved its highest levels of film production and export during this period of intense creativity and experimentation. Film artists and theorists were committed to the 'new cinema' (novi film) or open cinema movement. The movement received the name of Black Wave and sought to increase the individual and collective freedom of artistic expression, to reform cinematic form and language, and to connect it with contemporary themes. Films were used to critique the darker side of human and political existence within the context of a Marxist-Socialist state (Goulding 2002). In addition to this trend came the exploration of the interaction between diverse ethnic groups, as we see in Aleksandr Petrovic film, *Skupljaci perja / I even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967). The film depicts, in a frank, mostly realist, and only slightly romantic way, the life and problems of Roma people living at the margins of Yugoslav society, in Vojvodina, Serbia. It is a piece of serious social criticism and may be considered a milestone in Gypsy cinema since it is the first film that deals with the isolation of the Roma community from the rest of the society, even if the theme is approached mainly from the perspective of self- isolation.

The Black Wave gained international attention and provoked significant controversy within Yugoslavia. At the same time, a much larger number of films

promoted more orthodox aesthetic values and points of views, illustrating a growing trend towards the production of light-entertainment films for the domestic audience. Progressive liberalisation of film form and expression reached its zenith in 1967– 68. In the next four years, the counter-offensive against new film intensified. Black films were attacked for their pessimistic view of Yugoslav socialist development, liberalism, anarchistic and individualistic tendencies. This was a part of the broader political developments and led to the effective banning of some films. This ideological climate was followed by a great financial crisis in the Yugoslav film industry at the end of the 1960s. At the same time, in Czechoslovakia a process of 'Normalization" occurred in the aftermath of the Prague Spring and many of the Czechs and Slovaks New Wave films made around the mid-60s were banned as particularly subversive, even though, their main strength was laughter over pragmatism and social clumsiness. The backlash against non-traditional and new wave cinema was a by-product of the Brezhnev era of Stagnation that occurred about the same time in the Soviet Union and consolidated communist rule through pragmatic policies rather than opening an ideological debate about the adaptation of communism to contemporary society (Beumers 2009).

The political and cultural climate of the 60's often sent contradictory signals to artists and filmmakers. Although they could never be sure of the boundaries of the permissible, another thing is sure: that film politics largely benefited from the chaotic policies of the Thaw.

The Cinema of Moral Concern of the '70

The next significant current that arose within Russian and Eastern European Film is the cinema of moral concern. The 70's and the first half of the '80s were the autumn years of socialism, 'unlovable but livable', as some have aptly described what others have termed 'goulash communism' (Iordanova 2003). Illusions and hopes raised during the Thaw – for a socialist system that took account of the individual and his aspirations – were gradually shattered in the years after Khruschev was ousted (Beumers 2009). The promised prosperity did not materialized and no drastic changes were expected. The routines of this 'normalized' environment of stagnated socialism brought about indifference and moral insecurity. The cracks in the system were growing deeper and deeper and the cinema of moral concern played an important role in all this as the unease about obscured moral sensitivity had become an overwhelming preoccupation for film-makers in Eastern Europe. The moral anxiety did not engage in direct political critique, yet the screen images exposed the crisis of the regime by showing the stagnating lives of ordinary people (Iordanova 2003).

Even if the films of moral concern represent the most important cinematic trend of the '70 in this case no significant connection with the Gypsy cinema can be established.

Because they didn't meet the criteria to acquire national status, which included common language, territory, economy and culture, the Roma were deprived of protection and certain rights provided by the recognition as a national minority. Speaking their own

language, dressing distinctively and maintaining their own economic niche through self-employment (McGarry 2010), the Roma were anything else but the prototype of the socialist citizen. In addition, their communities existing beyond the influence of state agencies were perceived as a threat to political stability and ideological hegemony, an incitement to disorder (Stewart 1997).

Therefore, integration was regarded as inappropriate and assimilation became the organizing principle, the State's agenda including gradual suppression of cultural identity and work programs (McGarry 2010). Forced sedentarization became the norm and communist authorities created jobs for Roma (and the rest of society), mostly in factories and farms. Work was supposed to serve several complementary functions: fuel the economy which was completely controlled by the state, give a sense of ownership and belonging to Roma, and breakdown previously held negative stereotypes of Roma as work-shy wanderers (McGarry 2010).

Although the communist system achieved a noticeable improvement in the living conditions of many Roma communities, aiming to combat previous discrimination by guaranteeing jobs, a home and education for Roma children, in the end, it resulted in Roma as well as the society as a whole becoming very dependent on the state to provide goods and services. At the same time their cultural identity was deeply affected: they lost the right to speak their own language, dress distinctively, or maintain their own economic niche through self-employment.

If some of these aspects reflect in some notable films about Roma made during the 60's and later during the 80's such as *Skupljaci Perja* (Petrovic 1968) or *Dom za vesanje* (Kusturica 1988), when cinema of the region experienced waves of openness in the crushing omnipresence of censorship, the situation is different for the 70's. In this period very few films were made about Roma, the exception being represented by the Soviet Union, where several classical films about Roma were produced, culminating in two films directed by Moldovan director Emil Loteanu.

One of these is *Tabor ukhodit v Nebo / Gypsy Camp Disappears into Heaven* or *Queen of the Gypsies* released in 1976. The film is a colorful, music-filled sensual melodrama and one of the best examples for the use of gypsy music in cinema, but also a romanticized narrative of the Gypsies' supposed mystical powers of fortune telling, and their supposed irascible or passionate temper paired with an indomitable love of freedom and a habit of criminality. The other one, *Lautarii / Fiddlers* (1972), was about a travelling Romani band in Bessarabia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Both films became sustained box- office hits, both within the Soviet Union and internationally, though mostly across the Eastern bloc where they stayed in circulation for years (Chiline 2003).

Gypsy Cinema during the Last Years of Socialism

The 1980's experienced an increased acceptance of various artistic developments in narrative and style that did not fit within the limits of Socialist Realism (non-linear narrative experimentation since the 1960's, dream sequences, fantasy flashbacks, and so on) (Iordanova 2003). With the succession of Mihail Gorbachev to the Soviet leadership in 1985 a more liberal policy was advanced. Several formerly banned films were released and offered for export for the first time and coproduction with Western countries was encouraged (Cook 1990). These were welcome changes, but they were thought to be largely cosmetic until 1986, which marked an important turning point for the cinema of the region. In that year, Gorbachev announced his intention to change the nature of Soviet society through a new glasnost ("openness") and perestroika ("restructuring") policies and the effects soon became visible in different mediums, including the film. The states' cultural policies gradually became more flexible (alongside the growing tolerance in issues of faith). A wider variety of artistic forms of expression, until recently excluded from the official public life, came to be integrated within the sphere of permissible cultural practices. Realism was no longer an imperative, and filmmakers could abandon socially committed 'realist' film making altogether and declare their interest in existential themes (Iordanova 2003).

Yugoslav cinema did not make a real comeback until the late 70's and early 80's, when a new direction was indicated by a group of young directors known as the "Prague Group" because they had all studied at FAMU in the years of "black film" counterattack

(Cook 1990). One of the most active members of this group was Goran Paskalević, whose works deal with a diverse range of themes, including the Roma theme. His film *Anjeo cuvar / Guardian Angel* (1987), written and produced by the director, is a horrifying documentary-style exposé of the traffic in Roma children between Yugoslavia and Italy, where they are exploited as virtual slaves (Cook, 2004).

Two others directors closely associated with the Prague Group and relevant for the topic of this thesis, are Slobodan Šijan and Emir Kusturica. The first one became internationally famous for his black comedies of Serbian manners. *Ko to tamo peva? / Who's That Singing over There?* (Sijan 1980) is an episodic account of a twenty-four hour bus ride across the muddy roads of Serbia that delivers its passengers to Belgrade at the precise moment of the Nazi onslaught on April 6, 1941, killing all aboard but two Gypsies, whose songs have connected the narrative.

But the rising star of Yugoslav cinema and indisputably the most brilliant of Gypsy cinema in the mid-80;s was the Bosnian director Emir Kusturica. Like other films by members of the Prague Group and their associates discussed above, Kusturica's films have been both critically successful and enormously popular with audiences at home and abroad. Nevertheless, according to David Cook, *Dom za vesanje / Time of the Gypsies* (1988) is much less mainstream than his earlier work in its poetic evocation of Roma life and its occasionally experimental structure (Cook 1990). Made in the twilight of communism, *Dom za vesanje*, Kusturica is approaching the same theme as Goran Pskalević in *Anjeo cuvar*, namely the illegal traffic of Roma Yugoslav children to Italy

and the result is a complex film, whose imagery and magic realism imposed new standards in Gypsy cinema.

As for the Soviet cinema of the 1980s, this is divided into pre-perestroika and perestroika periods. As far as the representation of Roma is concerned, the first important pre-perestroika film was Sergei Nikonenko's *Tsyganskoye schast'e / Gypsy Happiness (1981)* which did manage to present a quite realistic image of Roma life. A notable example of the last efforts of Soviet propaganda to find a new type of socialist hero was Alexander Blank's Tv series *Vozvrashchenie Budulaia / The Return of Budulaya* (1985), a sequel of a famous film from the 70's *Tsygan* (Matveyev 1979) and featuring highly estheticized images of "celluloid Gypsies". Even though the series only had one Romani member of the cast, it was particularly attractive to a large number of Russian speaking spectators, while the Roma were highly ironical about it.

Other remarkable portrayals of Russian Roma are those present in Nikita Mihalkov's film *Oci ciornie / Dark Eyes* (1987) and Eldar Ryazanov's *Zhestokiy romans / A Cruel Romance* (1987); although highly stylized and exoticised, the Gypsy presence substantially contributed to the popularity of these films (Jordan 2013).

The first film belonging to the perestroika period was *Tsyganka Aza / Gypsy Aza* (Kokhan 1987), featuring a remarkable Romani cast and receiving the critique praises for its artistic quality (Chiline 2003).

The New Gypsy Cinema of the 90's: Romanticism vs. Neorealism

As in Russia itself, the political situation under which Eastern European directors worked changed radically after the fall of the communist regimes and the 90's saw a good deal of turmoil in the former eastern bloc countries (Wexman and Ellis 2006). Cinema industries soon witnessed the loss of guaranteed state funding. Profound changes in production financing included the substitution of film units with independent producers, the introduction of new strategies in state subsidies (which are now awarded on a per project basis and cover just a percentage of the production costs), the growing role of television in feature film making, the increased interest and dependency on international co-productions, but also the emergence of private investment in film-making. Under the new conditions, production levels stabilized relatively fast and the balance in output numbers, disturbed originally by the drastic cuts in centralized funding, was restored in many of the East European countries (Iordanova 2003).

In post-communist times, the Roma population of Eastern European countries was affected by excessive impoverishment and racism and some of the worst cases of institutional racism, human rights abuses and violent attacks have been reported here (World Watch 1992). The Roma became the scapegoats for many problems. From the insecurity of everyday life (murders, robberies) to the damaging of the country's image abroad and their high birthrate (Boia 2001), almost any blame was put in their account. In Romania, for example, World Watch Report declared in 1991 a number of 17 assaults on Roma communities since late 1989 and five Roma deaths attributed to mob violence.

The impact of these attacks was considered extremely critical, all the more as the Romanian police and the Romanian government failed to respond effectively and appropriately to these assaults: no culpable was found and no compensations were granted (World Watch, 1992).

An old ambivalence survived up to our days. On the one hand, Roma were usually perceived as exotic and entertaining, free from any authority, colorful, seductive, with a catchy cheerfulness that makes you willing to forget your everyday problems and obligations. On the other hand, in real life, the connections between Roma and the Gadjos are very thin. After the fall of the communism, Roma found themselves isolated and no longer protected by a paternalist state, which resulted in high unemployment, sub-standard accommodation and inadequate health care. With a low education level and missing basic skills to compete in a free market economy, their situation deteriorated and mainstream society begun to consider them as an unwanted and unnecessary appendage (McGarry 2010). Members of the dominant population discovered and started to affirm that it is impossible for them to live with Roma, as they are primitive, dangerous and they have no desire to be like the rest of the population. Besides that, the Roma do not want to abandon their old and often abusive traditions and integrate into the host society. Those who try to do that, find themselves trapped somewhere in between, with no solid identification within any ethnic group. Some of them even deny their ethnic origin, attempting to socially integrate or, sometimes, simply misleading the non-Roma.

The complex social situation of the Roma in the periphery of today's Europe has been the subject of many international documentaries, showing concern for their socio-economic conditions and the growing racial hatred they face on a daily basis (Iordanova 2003). These issues have also been the center of attention for feature film-makers from the region and had translated into a real explosion of films about the Roma. The way Roma are treated in post-Communist cinema, however, does not seem to have profoundly changed yet and reflect to some extent the ambivalent attitude mentioned above. The new films were supposed to be characterized by the desire to make socially conscious feature dramas that would be genuinely concerned with the Romani predicament and would result in films that address the troubled relationship between the dominant ethnic group and this minority. Some recent films did indeed attempt, with various degrees of success, to replace the excessive traditional exoticism with unvarnished realism. Others went exactly the opposite way and continued exploiting the exotic image. The Roma population across the region today may be poor and exposed to racist attacks, there may be serious social concerns over the causes of trafficking and marginalization, yet in many films that use the Roma "trope" there was no place for melancholy or serious meditation. Poverty or social marginalization were often seen as irrelevant, and as Dina Iordanova points out

> "…the Gypsy protagonists were frequently shown living in a self-contained universe of celebratory enjoyment. The Roma universe was continuously represented as inhabited by passionate lovers, as a visually sumptuous microcosm of exuberant flamboyance, a kingdom of excitingly contagious lifestyle overtaken by intense vigor and desire for life" (2003:158).

The socially critical *Marian* (Vaclav 1996), for example, tells the story of a Romani boy whose life revolves around petty crime, and excessive punishment, and takes an inevitable pathway from juvenile delinquency to prison. Strikingly similar is *Chernata Lyastovitsa / Black Swallow*, directed by Georgi Djulgherov, a veteran director of the Bulgarian Cinema (1997). Magdalena, the Gypsy heroine of the film shares almost the same destiny with Vaclav's character. The romantic allure of Gypsy charms, passions and fortune telling has been increasingly demystified and the esoteric fascination with Gypsies has given way to an increasing anxiety over extreme pauperization and racism (Iordanova 2008).

Yet this film, once again, represent a new modification of the 'Gypsy genre' – one in which the exoticism comes in the guise of hard hitting realism. Even more, the film fails to impress due to unnecessary stylization (an example would be the exaggerate exploitation of the birds' symbolism) and unconvincing characters.

Gritty realities are depicted in some Hungarian films, often with strong documentary power, such as Szabó Ildikó's *Gyerekgylkosságok / Child Murderers* (1993) or Bence Gyöngyössy's *Romani kris / Gypsy Lore* (1997), which is based on the story of King Lear. In other recent Hungaria films, such as Solyom András's *Erzékek iskolája / School of sensitivity* (1996) and Zoltán Kamondi's *Kiséték / Tempations* (2002) the young Roma women characters are defined by the excessively sensuality, obsessive, and ultimately destructive sexuality (Imre 2003, Iordanova 2003).

Similarly to *Dom za vesanje* (1988)*, Crna macka, beli macor / Black Cat, White Cat* (1997), another film made by Kusturica, deals with Gypsy life in former Yugoslavia, under the economic and social pressure brought by the dissolution of the paternalist communist structures and the difficulties of the newly established market economy (Gabor 2003). What is special about this film is that is focused on comedy and visualized as a kitsch collection of incongruous elements (Dobreva 2009).

During the ’90, an important series of Gypsy films directed by Tony Gatlif, a French director of Algerian and Roma origin, make its debut. *Latcho Drom* (1993), *Mondo* (1995), *Gadjo Dilo/ The crazy Stranger* (1997) are all films that are trying to portray Roma as talented musicians and/or victims of the *gadje* discrimination. It has been argued that these films often showed a political agenda and provided the Western world with an insider’s view on Roma life (Devi 1997, Fuller 1998).

Although during the ’90 to make a movie in Russia had become a luxury (Chiline 2003), over the course of the decade, Russian cinema saw the release of three important films about Roma: *Gadjo* (Svetozarov 1992), *Ia vinovat / Is my fault* (Vishnevsky 1993), and *Greshnie apoštoly lyubvi / Sinful Apostles of Love* (Dmitrievskiy and Vishnevsky 1995).

It was considered that Svetozarov’s *Gadjo* is the first post-Soviet film that changed the traditional exotic and rose-colored images of Roma and revealed their authentic way of life (Chiline 2003). Dufunya Vishnevskiy (d. 2003) made a special case since he was the only Russian director of Roma origin (not to mention that he was one of

the very few Roma directors from the region) and his films used almost exclusively Romani actors. His two films mentioned above both strictly adhere to the unwritten Romani rules which indicate which is the appropriate way of behaving among the Roma and among the Gadjos; if the first one is a modern crime drama, involving the "new Gypsies" and their relationships with the Russian mafia, the second one is a unique approach on the Roma's destiny during the Second World War.

Latest Trends in Gypsy Cinema or What the Future Might Bring?

In Dina Iordanova's opinion, it is unlikely that the socially conscious trend in representing the Roma minority will prevail because in post-communist time cinema is expected more than ever to deliver entertainment that sells, or socially conscious films have been only marginally successful, with limited distribution in Europe and U.S. Iordanova's vision on the future consists of a filmic co-existence between "Gypsy exotica" and "Romani predicament". This co-existence reveals the inherent contradictions of the mainstream nationalist discourse: we consider the Roma as a constantly present part of the nation while at the same time we exclude them by reiterating their ungrateful rejection of conformation to the main values of society (Iordanova 2003).

Complementing Iordanova's pessimist observations, Nikolina Ivantcheva Dobreva (2009) notices a new trend that seems to have established in Russia and Eastern Europe in the past few years. What happened was that audiences for Latin American

telenovelas have rapidly decreased determining national televisons to seek alternatives better suited to current tastes. One of the solutions was to produce native narratives with a similar structure and some of the results were the Russian series *Karmelita* (Kubayev 2005) and the Romanian series *Inima de tigan / Gypsy Heart* (Fotea, Luncasu, and Voinea 2007).

The plots feature nomadic Gypsy camps, horses, musical performances, vendettas, exotic clothes, and an inaccurate purposively comic language, in other words, all of the stereotypical representations we have been accustomed to over time, including a high dose of negative stereotypes that permutes their purpose.

The Eastern European re-adaptation of a genre originated in Latin America and the wide distribution throughout the region, limits once more in Dobreva's opinion the social roles and behavioral patterns available to Roma (2009).

Aniko Imre considers that the key element in the evolution of Roma representation is the adjustment of the nationalist discourse related to Roma (2003), while Dina Iordanova place her stake on a larger presence of filmmakers of Roma origin (2001, 2003). In addition, Dobreva considers that the disappearance of stereotypes will come about only when Romani representations become sufficiently varied and abundant as to be taken for granted (2009). Nonetheless, the vast majority of scholars agree that the screen representation of Roma will not substantially change until Roma's social status improve dramatically and they become active participants in their own cultural production.

Identified Causes of Positive Representation in Gypsy Cinema

There are several possible reasons for the phenomenon of reversed negative stereotyping and for the perpetuation of exoticism and stereotypical representation in Gypsy cinema, even in the case of films that tried to offer an authentic portrayal of Roma.

One possible reason is suggested by Nikolina Ivantcheva Dobreva and refers to the influence of early representations of Gypsies in American cinema. By the early 1920s (marking the emergence of classical Hollywood cinema), the norm in filmmaking was the narrative fiction feature film that provided entertainment for all. This development is of major significance for the ethnic representation of Roma according to the author, since audiences are, to this day, most likely to encounter cinematic Gypsies in fictional plots that aim to entertain. Such characters and plots abound in American cinema, suggesting a steady interest in Gypsies as an exotic plot element, especially since the majority of the titles involve child kidnapping, fortune-telling, love triangles, stabbings, and dancing – in a word, all the stereotypical imagery associated with the Roma in the 19th century and to this day. The stereotyping is hardly surprising in Dobreva's opinion, since the vast majority of these productions were based on (predominantly 19th -century) literary sources, of which the most prominent is Mérimée's "Carmen." However, as the author herself admits, it is difficult to assess the overall influence of Hollywood on Eastern European filmmakers during the Communist era and it is uncertain whether these filmmakers would be familiar with Hollywood Gypsy representations (Dobreva 2009).

Another reason would be that the Balkan films abound with Gypsies but they are not made by Roma or for Roma, but by and for the dominant groups. Even more, although most films about the Roma are made by film-makers who do not belong to this ethnic group, it is the existing Roma representations in Balkan cinema that define the way Roma self-representation is tackled in the work of ethnic Romani film-makers (Iordanova 2001).

If these films are not meant 'to represent' the Roma it seems that their ultimate function is to project concern about oneself. Furthermore, we can understand better the rough realism and the excessive exoticism if we considered it in the context of Balkan preoccupation with marginality. Exploring the Roma in Balkan film-making has served not only to produce a critique of rationalism and morality as opposed to romanticism, freedom, and non-conformism (as has been the case with many Western treatments of the Gypsy topic), but also became an echo of the discussions concerning the problematic positioning of the Balkans in Europe. This process falls under the spectrum of "projective identification" which is a term borrowed from psychology and applied in film studies by Mattijs van de Port in 1998, and it can be synthetized the following way. As the Roma appear to mainstream society – marginal and poorly adapted but likeable for their vigor and non-traditional exuberant attitude – so the Balkans (would like) to appear to Europe (Port 1998).

In my opinion, it is also a process which may be tagged as "nesting Balkanism", a subdivision of "nesting Orientalism", which is a concept introduced by Milica Bakić-

Hayden as a variant of Said's Orientalism and explains how a group which creates the Orientalized other can also be the subject of Orientalization by another group, and so on (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992). According to Edward Said, who coined the term Orientalism, the Orient is a Western invention that regards it as a place, to the East of Europe, "of romance, of exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said 1978), p 1). "Orientalism," then, is the concept of engaging with cultures and cultural products originating to the East of Europe from a colonial, imperialist standpoint. The concept acts as a self-affirmation of the colonizer. Said's initial analysis was largely directed at the Middle East, as well as the regions of Persia and India. Said acknowledged that for the Americas "the Orient" might have different associations, because it might relate mostly to the Far East, but overall his conceptualization has been applied to all regions East of Europe and on the Western edge of the Pacific Rim, generally known as "the East." Orientalism has also affected Eastern critical observations of the West. Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto argues misrepresentations are unavoidable: "the Other cannot be misrepresented, since it is always already a misrepresentation" (Yoshimoto 1993 p. 338).

The fact that Roma are considered to be the least integrated ethnic community in these parts bears direct parallels with the way the Balkans are seen in a wider context - as the least integrated group of countries within the greater European realm. Thus, the compassion exhibited for the plight of the Roma is often an expression for the (suppressed) self-pitying attitude of the dominant group, who may be dominant in one

context, but feel subservient in another. (Iordanova 2001) A colorful illustration for this phenomenon would be for instance some of the reactions that Nikita Mihalkov's *Oci ciornie / Dark Eyes (1987)*, without being a significant exponent of Gypsy cinema, rendered in the aftermath of its release. A reader of a Russian periodical that reviewed Mihalkov's film shows his indignation in the following terms:

> 'Why does he [Mihalkov] consider the most typical traits of the Russian character … to lie in the basic lack of culture, in the drunkenness to a level of loathing, in the humiliating ingratiation before foreigners […] How beggarly and primitive is Mother Russia! You can only "drink bottoms up", and dance, intoxicated, to gypsy songs.' (A. Lepshei, 'Vysyvaet nedoumenie, *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, 24 December 1988, quoted in (Beumers 2005).

And, a few months earlier, film critique Nina Agisheva is reporting from Cannes in essentially the same terms:

> 'in this film Russia is seen through the eyes of an Italian in the literal […] and figurative sense. For a foreigner, Russia is frequently associated with gypsies, black caviar, vodka, and illogical and inexplicable ways of life.' (Kak zhivesh', chelovek? *Literaturnoe obozrenie*, Septeber 1987, p. 87, quoted in (Beumers 2005).

If film-makers have often used the subject of the Roma's ostracism to express their own sense of exclusion from the Western world, it is not clear to what extent, however, they actually want to be inside, as they recurrently assert that being outside of the rational sphere of civilization may actually be seen as "admittance to another, esoteric sphere of enjoyment and gratification from which the civilized nations are banned" (Iordanova 2001 p.218). In other words, Roma are pariah, but they are also embodiments of freedom, and even if they are uncivilized and backward, at the same time civilization

could be seen as self-consuming, while backwardness could be seen as vitality (Živković 1998).

Another possible explanation is the one suggested by Marko Zivkovic as an update to a claim made in 1989 by Andrzej Wajda who said:

> "Films made in Eastern Europe seem of little or no interest to people in the West. The audiences in Western countries find them as antediluvian as the battle for worker's rights in England in the time of Marx. Thus our efforts here in Eastern Europe have nothing to show audiences in the West who look upon the world they live in as permanent […] And that is a pity, for I am certain that those concerns are not ours alone but apply to the world at large , or will in the very near future." (Wajda 1989 pp. 131-2)

In addition, Dina Iordanova believes that to many viewers in the West the East European concerns appear limited to a monotonous existence involving depressed protagonists living controlled lives associated with the greyness of landscape and urban milieu. Therefore the imagined vision of the whole region was of a squalid place where everything was dark, colorless and claustrophobic (Iordanova 2003).

Zivkovic considers that the use of Roma-related plots "is consciously exploited within Balkan film-making and is part of a specific strategy targeting Western audiences" (1998 p. 17). Within the framework of what he calls "romanticisation of barbarity", Zivkovic claims that a periphery would present itself to the metropolis in terms of what is most denigrated in the overarching hierarchy in an attempt to reverse its values. Therefore he asks: "Why should a Paris urbanite be interested in the mundane problems of a Belgrade urbanite?" and he also offers the answer: "Barbarity, violence and Gypsy

exotica are much sexier. For the periphery, that can result in many material and immaterial benefits, from increased tourism revenues to Golden Palms at the Cannes Festival." (Živković 1998, p.17)

Another possible reason is identified by Anikó Imre in a perceptive study of the representation of Roma in post-communist Hungarian media and cinema; she considers that the source of the problem consists of the inherent contradictions characterizing the 'use' of the image of the Gypsy within the nationalist discourse of the post-communist countries themselves. While Roma are inherently transnational subjects, within the nationalist discourse of countries like Hungary, Poland, the Czech and Slovak republics and other former Eastern Bloc countries, they are still treated as 'belonging' to a nation which simultaneously rejects them (2003).

Finally, Roma are often portrayed in exotic terms but normally not as a hostile threat, possibly because they are seen as a transnational minority which does not have the backing of an expansionist power. As they are not perceived as a menace, they are not portrayed negatively (Iordanova 2001) and this may be directly linked with the fact that the number of Gypsy films produced in a country is in inverse proportion to the number of problems related to Roma and the intensity of the negative perception on them. These, I argue, are the cases of Romania and Bulgaria, for example.

Conclusions

Although Roma minority was frequently represented in film, most scholars agree that their cinematic presence was constantly stereotyped and exoticized, often through what I claim to be a process of reversed negative stereotyping. Another important feature that must be considered in any discussion on Eastern European Gypsy cinema is that even if there are many films featuring Roma, only a small number of those explore the troubled relationship between the dominant ethnic group and the minority.

One possible reason is that rather than being given chance to portray themselves, the Roma people have been usually depicted by others. Other reasons include the influence of American Gypsy representation, the phenomenon of "projective identification" experienced by the members of the dominant group correlated with a form of Orientalism (Nesting Balkanism), but also what Marko Zivkovic calls "romanticization of barbarity". The image of the Roma in the nationalist discourse throughout the region and the lack of any political power are identified as other possible causes.

If we look at the Gypsy cinema from a historical point of view, it becomes noticeable that generally it followed the same tendencies existing in Eastern European cinema.

The history of Gypsy cinema in Eastern Europe is closely related to the political events from the region, particularly with regards to the Soviet Union's cultural policies .

This relationship becomes obvious from the birth of Gypsy cinema, since the first features are influenced by communist propaganda and censorship. It continues with the Gypsy cinema development through the 60's and the emergence of cinematic revolutionary new waves, especially in former Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The 70's represent a distinctive moment, since it is mainly a period of stagnation in Gypsy cinema and the most important trend of the decade, the cinema of moral concern, doesn't influence it. The historical connection renews during the 80's when the first signals of communism's fall appear and continues during the troubled period of transition to democracy, when interesting and dramatic changes in representation occur. The ambivalent attitude of the dominant population toward Roma materialized in two trends in representation ("correcting the record" and "celebrating the non-conventional") and a mix of romanticism and neorealism. As a consequence it happened that even film-makers sincerely concerned with the Roma predicament chose to exploit the visual richness of their non-conventional life styles and to use recurring narrative tropes.

There are great chances for these two tendencies to continue to co-exist, although the socially conscious Gypsy cinema is menaced by an increased popular demand for Gypsy exotica. Nevertheless, an unbiased attitude toward Roma within the Eastern European nationalist discourse and an improvement of their social status together with an increased active participation in their own cultural life could improve the situation and contribute to the elimination of different kind of stereotypes.

Chapter 3: Findings

Skupljaci perja / I Even Met Happy Gypsies (Aleksandar Petrovic, 1967)

The production of one of the most famous Yugoslav Gypsy films of all times, *Skupljači perja / I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967) came at a time of decentralization and liberation, when filmmakers all around Eastern Europe were searching to tackle contemporary themes, and were particularly interested in realism. It is also the film that put Aleksandar Petrovic's name on the map of talented directors and brought him a lastly fame.

Set in the Northern Serbian region of Vojvodina, home to a number of different ethnic groups, *Skupljači perja* deals with a sedentary community of Roma. The story revolves around Bora, a goose-feather merchant, and his rivalry in business and love with fellow Gypsy Mirta. An incorrigible gambler, Bora wastes all his income on cards; whenever he needs capital to purchase feathers for sale he pawns his only valuable possession, a black-and-white television set. He is involved in a loveless marriage in the Gypsy slum, infatuated with Tisa (Mirta's step-daughter), and having an affair with Lena, the singer in a local pub. As Bora attempts to make a living and juggle his personal life among the three women, his world slowly collapses, leading him eventually to a grave conflict with Mirta over trade territories and Tisa's love. The film ends with Bora

stabbing Mirta to death, and a subsequent police investigation with which the Gypsies completely refuse to cooperate.

Skupljači perja is not a literary adaptation, meaning that the story is not mediated by iconic national writers. Following Black Wave or "Novi film" principles, it engages with contemporary themes, and is marginally critical of a socialist society that allows an entire neighborhood to live in extreme poverty.

The value of the film lies in the authentic glimpses of the Roma community, as it combines alluring stereotypes with the realities of the Romani existence. In terms of characters we have two protagonists: Bora and a collective hero, Roma community. The latter consists of strong and flamboyant women, singing but also sometimes screaming and kicking, of drinking man, clashing and fighting, and of shabby children chasing geese and puffing cigarettes (Iordanova 2001). A great dose of negative stereotyping is present here, but nothing seems unusual. On the contrary, these elements are just common attributes of the daily life. Most of the Gypsies in the film seem to be unemployed, but do not take active steps to end their plight. We see people who live in the interstices of the socialist economy, buying and selling and doing odd jobs like street cleaning, prostitution, and collecting goose feathers from goose farmers to sell for pillow making. Within their community, there seems to be little in the way of external legal enforcement; they settle disputes by violence, community enforcement, and so on. When the law does apply to them, it is again something entirely external. Men beat their wives and other women, and abandon them seemingly at will for other women. Alcoholism and gambling

are common, seemingly necessary components of the image of masculinity. And at the end of the film, we see how the community refuses to co-operate with the police in turning in one of their own, although they know he is guilty of murder.

The Gypsies themselves seem to be making no effort to acquire additional skills or education in order to improve their situation; on the contrary they are shown as having a very low opinion of themselves and each other. Children can be seen throughout the slum, but none go to school. Instead, a twelve-year-old boy is forced to marry Tisa (who is in late adolescence herself) when Mirta begins to worry that he might lose her to Bora. In a number of scenes, other young children smoke or simply stand around. Bora's children are always close to their mother; they are playing, crying, or watching television, but never studying or accomplishing anything productive.

In this context Roma community is constructed as impulsive and irresponsible; even if they are settled, they do not participate in social structures outside of their slum, and their contact with mainstream organizations is limited to brief encounters with the judicial system. Represented as pagan savages, they could and sometimes do try to make peace with themselves and others via adopting Christianity[1], normal behavior or by obeying the social authorities that set the norm.

[1]According to Nikolina Ivantcheva Dobreva (2009), no critical interpretations of the film focus on its heavy religious symbolism. Shots of church murals are interspersed at turning points in the narrative; priests and nuns negotiate with the Gypsies influencing their opinions and a character claims that her geese are "like angels – each would yield a kilo of feathers." Religious ceremonies are also featured. The author considers that the incorporation of religious elements in the narrative, character construction, and the visual imagery might well be the most transgressive technique the film uses, since religion is a subversive practice in secular communist countries. As far as Romani representation is concerned, religion is also important in

Also, what Petrovic powerfully succeeds in suggesting is the self-isolation of the group from the rest of the society. Even poverty is validated as a specific means of protection from the vices of a consumerist society and this leads to a different form of romanticism, one disguised in realism (Pasqualino 2008). In the director's vision Roma seem to value their freedom, because they simply do not want to give up their way of life or they mistrust the 'outside' world too much to believe in something like socialism. This is suggested by the line toward the beginning saying that they would not want to 'join the working class' ("A crooked gypsy or a crooked worker, what's the difference?"). It is also suggested by such moments as the key shot in which the protagonist cuts open his own bags of goose feathers and lets them fly out of the lorry in which he is riding; although he loses his income, he seems to enjoy it because he sees the feathers 'flying free'. Then, interestingly, he lies to a police officer and says that he was drunk at the time. This seems to be suggestive of a wider metaphor; that there is something precious about the life of the Roma that they simply do not want to give up, or that is natural to them, and that they use negative stereotypes to barricade themselves against the outside world.

As for the protagonist of the film, as in other literary and cinematic representations of Gypsies, Bora is involved in a love triangle, although solely with Gypsy women. He similarly loves freedom, is moved by music, and becomes violent when he has to defend his love. He even has his own particular performance ability, that

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that it mediates the Gypsy characters' attempt to tap into a spiritual realm. In my opinion, the use of Orthodox Christian imagery is a social commentary that clearly mocks religion and portrays its remaining adherents as greedy, hypocritical, and clinging to power and wealth.

of a very talented trader (he is able to sell goose feathers even at a funeral). Bora is displayed on numerous occasions as an irresponsible character who lives only for the moment, takes action without thinking at the consequences, and ultimately plunges into vice and criminality. Starting as a drunkard and gambler, he ends up a murderer, bringing about not only his own destruction, but that of his family as well. The murder of Mirta is motivated by the latter's unwillingness to relinquish Tisa, interpreted by Bora as an attempt to limit his freedom of choice. It is difficult to forget, however, that Bora already has a wife and a lover when he "marries" Tisa. Using the technique of reversed stereotypes, Petrovic attempts to depict Bora as a hero struggling against a hostile society and the audience is led to sympathize with him, despite his gambling, promiscuity, and criminal acts. As a result, a romanticized image is constructed, with Bora as the corrupt Gypsy who cannot escape his oppressive environment, and whose white suit is the outward expression of the purity hidden inside him. A good example in this respect would be the scenes showing Bora having a violent quarrel with his wife. After losing all his money and even his shirt in a card game, he is seen forcibly taking the TV he once gave to his wife as a present. His intention is to pawn the TV which is a common situation that often repeats throughout the film, without altering Bora's perception within the group; on the contrary, because of its frequency it is intended to be amusing, to some extent.

As far as the relation with the dominant population is concerned, generally there is no hostility on the part of *gadjos* towards the ethnic group. In fact, many do business

with Bora and Mirta and others frequent the pub where Lena sings. However, Roma are not very well regarded by *gadjos*. Two lorry drivers symbolize the view of the Roma when they pick up a Roma girl who is hitch-hiking and assume that she will have sex with them (not for money); when she refuses one of them, he beats her. At another point, a policeman says 'Gypsies are only good for drinking with and throwing in jail'. The point being, the rest of society also seems to see these people as on the margins, understands them entirely on the basis of stereotypes, and treats them accordingly.

The official authority is barely present in the film, which in Dobreva's opinion might allow for an interpretation that would place the blame for Bora's destructive behavior on himself (2009). The authorities Roma get in contact with throughout the film are generally strict but fair. They prosecute infringements without any abuses. For example, the judge that fines Bora for littering when the latter purposefully spills all the bags of feathers that he has gathered does not harass or mistreat him in any manner. When the police investigate Mirta's murder, they intimidate a Gypsy criminal, threatening him with a jail sentence, until the criminal admits that Bora was the guilty party. This suggests that the police do not always follow procedures; however, their actions seem to be motivated by a desire to solve the crime quickly rather than to display any ethnic intolerance. This is confirmed in the final scene of the film where two policemen go door to door in the Gypsy slum asking about Bora. Met with silence and indifference, they simply walk away without investigation.

Shot on location in Vojvodina and in the languages of the region (Romani, Slovak, Serbian, and Romanian), *Skupljači perja* features, with few exceptions, an exclusively nonprofessional Romani cast. In addition, all the extras and some of the more prominent characters are portrayed by Roma from the region. The main character, Bora, is played by a Yugoslav actor of Albanian origin (Bekim Fehmiu), while his rival, Mirta (Bata Živojinović) is portrayed by a Serbian actor who had previously worked with Petrović. Another *gadjo* exception is Lena, played by an extremely popular Serbian actress and singer, Olivera Vučo. Bora's love interest, Tisa, however, is the debut role of local Romani teenage actress Gordana Jovanović, whom Petrović allegedly "found gathering feathers in the gypsy suburb of Vršac" (Adler 1968 p. 57). Therefore, as it is customary in Gypsy films prior to Kusturica and Gatlif, the two lead roles are played by professional, non-Romani actors who deliver a performance based on their own experiences and the director's vision.

The relation between Gypsies and music is also thoroughly exploited in *Skupljači perja.* The film opens and closes with the same scene, a view of a road as seen from a moving car. The scene develops to the sounds of the Romani song "Djelem, djelem," a recurring motif in the film from which its English-language title borrowed. Throughout the film, the song is performed several times by Lena in the pub, as well as by Tisa at Bora's request. Lena's performance is particularly significant, since it seems to bring forth unhindered desire on the part of her listeners.[2] Music is also featured in *Skupljači*

[2] As Lena sings, *gadjos* are shown interchangeably shouting out their approval, smoking, drinking heavily, and seizing a partner for a passionate kiss. At his turn, Bora stands up, breaks two glasses, and slams his

perja as part of an inevitable Gypsy wedding, an event very often featured in Gypsy cinema. Although far from extravagant, the celebration nonetheless allows the camera to dwell on dancing Gypsies. However, since the wedding (between Tisa and the 12-year-old boy) is imposed on the girl by Mirta and ends with the boy's inability to perform his conjugal duties, it soon degenerates into a scandal in the mud. The unglamorous representation is in sharp contrast with the lavish Gypsy weddings that audiences are accustomed to seeing in other films, and determined the critics to evaluate the film as "unromanticized."

But Petrović's vision, although quite realistically executed, is nevertheless developed on the basis of stereotypes. His film limits the social roles available to screen Gypsies, and, despite most critics' claims (Goulding 2002, Partridge 2000), consistently romanticizes these characters by associating them with freedom and music.

Esthetically, this film diverges greatly from the previous representations. Thematically, it reflects the 19th century interpretation of Gypsy behavior, and the limited plots in which Gypsies could potentially be involved. It also adds a new element that was to become a staple of East European post-1960s Romani representation, namely, the exoticism of the ethnic group's poverty (Dobreva 2009, Pasqualino 2008). Nevertheless, the film is a breakthrough in Yugoslav cinema, initiating a long line of Gypsy films coming from the wider region. According to Dakoviç (2013), Petrovic established the

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hands onto the shattered pieces. The only apparent reason for his behavior is his inability to control his emotions, triggered by the poerful music. Film critic Goran Gocić commented on this scene establishing a connection between music and the "Slavic soul" as expressed in *sevdah*, a secular form of trance reached while listening to music, and involving a synthesis of pain and pleasure (2001).

familiar images of "Balkan exotics" of which Gypsies are an essential part: worship of freedom, doomed pride and life, adoration of music, mysteries etc. are all elements that can be traced and sometimes reinterpreted in later films, recommending the film as an ancestor of the genre.

Tabor ukhodit v Nebo/ Gypsy Camp Goes to Heaven (Emil Loteanu, 1976)

Tabor ukhodit v Nebo directed by Muscovite-Moldovan (as he called himself) Emil Loteanu is without any doubt one of the most influential films made in the Soviet Union and featuring Gypsies. The film received a number of international festival awards, and, with some 65 million viewers, claimed the title of "most watched film" in the USSR in 1976. The film was also popular abroad – it received several international awards (Belgrade, 1977; Panama, 1977), including the prestigious San Sebastian "best picture" award (1976)[3].

Emil Loteanu's film is a screen adaptation of Maxim Gorki's 1892 tale *Makar Chudra*. It is not the only one adaptation; there is also an opera composed by Giacomo Orefice and based on the character of Rada. The story is set on the nineteenth century border between Russia and Austro – Hungarian Empire, in the Western Carpathians. A Hungarian aristocrat becomes infatuated with the Gypsy woman Rada when his carriage driver nearly runs her down and she halts the horses with the power of her gaze. Later,

[3] In an interview featured on the DVD of the film, lead actress Svetlana Toma claims that the film was distributed in over 100 countries, and that she personally attended screenings in over 50 different countries.

the aristocrat drives to her camp and bring her a luxurious dress, asking Rada's father for her hand. The girl is allowed to decide for herself and she give the dress to the camp buffoon, humiliating the noble. She prefers instead a Gypsy man, a handsome horse thief named Zobar, but refuses even him obedience, making him promise that he will kiss her feet in front all their kin. On the wedding day, Rada makes fun of the proud Zobar and she refuses to give her hand when Zobar asks for it – shamed and angry, Zobar kills her and then is killed by her father.

In adapting Maxim Gorky's short story "Makar Chudra," Moldovan director Emil Loteanu added three new plotlines, all of which were meant to complicate the simple plotline of the original literary text, as well as to create clearly marked antagonisms between the characters. One of the plotlines involves Zobar's adventures as a horse thief, a profession that he proudly exercises, and, when caught, escapes in a dashing manner; this addition to the plot makes for exciting stunts, but it also solidifies the Gypsies' image as professional thieves. The other two plotlines transform the story of Loiko Zobar's love for another Gypsy, Rada, whose love of freedom makes it impossible for her to accept him as her husband, into two intersecting love triangles. Zobar is also the lover of a white *gadjo* woman, while Rada is actively courted by a Hungarian aristocrat. According to Nikolina Ivantcheva Dobreva (2009), this transformation is quite similar to that undertaken by Bizet and his librettists in the adaptation of Mérimée's novella into an opera. Just as the character of Micaela is introduced in Carmen, the opera, in order to make obvious Don Jose's choice between his own people and the outsiders, the two non-

Gypsy characters are introduced in *Tabor ukhodit v Nebo* in order to present the Gypsy protagonists with an obvious choice, and as a consequence foreground a rejection that is generally conceived as "typical Gypsy" behavior. The difference lies in the fact that the Gypsies are given more agencies since it is they who must choose.

This new narrative and character development, but also the extent of its director's involvement in the production, have a major role in Roma representation in this film. Emil Loteanu both wrote and directed the film, giving him the right to contribute as much to the creative process as was possible within the framework of a Communist film industry (Dobreva 2009). By the time he made this film, the director already had worked on Romani representation, with his film *Lautari / The Fiddlers* (1972), a poetic fictionalized vision of the life of Romani musicians in Moldova[4] and he also had published five poetry books. In "Emil Loteanu: 'I Bow to the Land..."[5], Valerii Fomin summarizes the impact that poetry has on Loteanu's cinematic work, by evoking the visual result of superimposing poetic sensibility onto writing and directing. Loteanu himself draws a parallel between the arts by articulating the purpose of the artist as "the attempt to preserve in memory the image of a loved one" (Fomin 1976 pp. 19-20).

The desire to create and store a poetic image in a work of art is reflected in the director's approach to *Tabor ukhodit v Nebo*, and specifically in his representation of Rada. The female Gypsy protagonist is very mysterious from her first appearance in the

[4] This 1972 feature was also the first film in which Loteanu's favorite actress and future companion, Svetlana Toma, was cast as a Gypsy girl.

[5] The book is a detailed account-commentary of Valerii Fomin encounter with Emil Loteanu during the early stages of shooting *Tabor ukhodit v Nebo*.

film when she stops the carriage of the Hungarian aristocrat Antal Szilagy by staring down his horses. Her first encounter with a wounded and delirious Zobar is also enigmatic. She materializes from behind a bush, treats his wound while muttering incantations, and then disappears. Images of Rada from these two scenes are then interspersed throughout the film, as the two male characters' memories flash repeatedly back to the day when they first met her. Working on his conceptualization of the artist as a poet, Loteanu creates an exotic and mysterious female Gypsy (Dobreva 2009) which perfectly fits the prototype of the Gypsy sorceress. Constant association of Roma with magic was initially a negative stereotype because Roma were perceived for a long time as Godless people and they were feared and hunted for their presumptive friendship with the devil; however, in film, Roma magicians are often portrayed as wise people, initiated in the world mysteries and willing to help those in need. Therefore the negative attribute progressively changed into a positive, exotic feature.

Another important aspect of poetic Romani representation in this film is the characters' focus on *volia*, or authentic, natural free will, complete spiritual freedom, which, the film suggests, no one bound into rigid social structures is ever able to experience. Makar Chudra (a minor character in the film) tells to the protagonist (Loiko Zobar) in the opening scene: "Don't love money – it will deceive you; don't love women – they'll deceive you." The only thing worth loving, living, and dying for, Chudra asserts, is *volia*, and throughout the film, Both Rada and Zobar's characters are marked by these words.

Pursued by the police and the army for his illegal activities, Zobar ends up in prison and faces a death sentence, yet manages to regain his freedom. More importantly, he never becomes emotionally involved with a woman to the extent that he is willing to change his lifestyle. His non-Gypsy lover, Julia, is very fond of him, but she knows that their relationship will always be limited to occasional visits. Similarly, Rada has numerous suitors, including the Hungarian Siladi who offers her and the whole wandering Gypsy camp financial support in return for her hand in marriage, but she never agrees to give away her freedom. Ultimately, the need of *volia* turns into another example of reversed stereotype; the obsession for total freedom ending in self destruction gains a tragically poetic aura of sacrifice in the name of freedom.

Because of its new narrative structure and character development, the film successfully manages to sketch a Gypsy identity. While in Gorky's short story the Gypsies live outside society and have nothing to do with any nationality, in the film they interact with that society on a daily basis and from a group living outside national identity and social regulations, they are transformed into a specific ethnic group composed predominantly of outlaws. However, in this representation, Gypsies do not defy social structures, but rather conform to a lifestyle that is inherently criminal. During the film it is suggested that Gypsies could not earn their living other way than by stealing and since it is unavoidable the only thing that matters and makes a difference is the value of the stolen goods and the risk undertaken. Illustrative in this sense is a very intense scene from the beginning of the film which involves in less than 10 minutes a quarrel caused by the

sale of a stolen painted horse, a Gypsy caught stealing hens and the bribing of a police officer. All of these are excused by means of a rhetoric question: "How would a Gypsy survive, if he doesn't steal anything?" and the scene culminates with Zobar slapping the hen thief and saying: "Do not steal hens! Steal virgins and horses, get into business!" In fact, the entire fragment contains different illustrations of reversed stereotyping: while Roma are clearly labeled as thieves, the scene is constructed in such manner that we are taught to sympathize with the outlaws, being at the same time entertained as a result of the detached and humoristic approach of the scene.

Considering that "folklore is always contemporary" (Fomin 1976 p. 30) Loteanu tried to incorporate folkloric elements in the narrative of some of his films, but in *Tabor ukhodit v Nebo* he turned to Romani folklore exclusively for the music of the film. Music and dance play a prominent role here since they are not only a major entertainment at the Romani camp, but they are also associated with a seduction technique having the force of a ritual and being an essential part of the "Gypsy soul."

The director describes the musical process as follows:

We traveled around the country, listened to the songs of Moldavian, Carpathian, Baltic, and even Siberian Gypsies, choosing the best of the best among them, and above all, songs that were completely unknown. If in *Lautarii* we used above all folklore musical sources in their more or less original form, in Tabor we took the path of stylization – enriching them and liberating them from any type of suspicious layering (Fomin 1976 p. 36).

The cleansing of Romani songs of any "suspicious layering" is confirmed by the composer, Evgenii Doga, in his interview included in a DVD release of the film. He explains that the authentic Romani music he and Loteanu had collected was too raw, and hence virtually unplayable. Doga provides further details on the process of systematically reworking the film score into its final form, admitting to having occasionally preserved only a specific type of Romani vocal interplay without which certain songs would not function.

These remarks reveal a desire on the part of the filmmakers to emphasize the Gypsies' musical abilities and to achieve a form of authentic representation, however this proved to be a very difficult task. As Dobreva notes, "authenticity is impossible on the level of the plot, since the latter is no more than the Romantic fantasy of a Russian writer supplemented with a Moldovan director's action packed scenes" (2009 p. 145). It is similarly impossible to achieve authenticity in the actors' performance or the film's musical score, since these, too, are mediated by the non-Romani actors themselves[6], as well as by the director and the composer of the film. All the performances are carefully staged and create a rift between the filmmakers' desire to convey a natural and freedom-loving performance on the one hand, and the artificiality of the scene on the other. However, music contributed significantly to the popularity of the film and another interesting fact is that Gypsies perceived the music as being representative for them, one of the songs from the movie becoming almost an international Roma hymn (*Nane Toha*).

[6] Moldovan actors (Grigore Grigoriu and Svetlana Toma) are in the two lead roles. There are three or four actors of Roma origin in the film, all from the Theater Romen and no "natural performers."

The characters' appearance and reactions also suggest love of freedom, although, in my opinion, this representation is clumsily executed. The Gypsy women's hair is set loose and flies in the wind. Exoticism is further emphasized through the brightly colored clothes and vibrant jewelry worn by the performers. All the Gypsies in the film wear bright clothes (and many layers of them – in one scene Rada removes nine skirts) and special attention is given to the importance of colorful scarves that women wear. All these are in sharp contrast with the black urban clothes, the soft talk and the rigid movement of non-Romani men, but also with the appearance of non-Romani women who wear relatively subdued clothes, and keep their blond hair in a tight bun (Dobreva 2009).

Another important aspect that exerts a notable influence on the strategies of representation is the target audience, which in this case is Russian. In an interview he poses the rhetorical question: "What can I, a Moldovan writer and director, tell the Russian viewers, how can I get them interested?" Loteanu answers his own question in the following way: "[…] naturally, by offering them my own reading of Russian literature, a new perspective on that literature" (Loteanu 1984 p. 93**).** Thus in the film, Romani representation is doubly mediated – not only by Russian literature, but also by a Moldovan director's reading of that literature. However, the importance of this particular Soviet film for the way in which Russians perceive the Roma cannot be overemphasized.

Thematically, *Tabor ukhodit v Nebo* is entirely focused on music and on the portrayal of a certain concept of freedom. It opens with pan shots of endless fields, with Roma traveling in wagons and on horseback. Panoramic shots abound throughout the

film. The narrative is relatively fast-paced and foregrounds various types of movement. The location is Bessarabia (Moldova), or in other words, the literary dwelling place of most Gypsies in Russian literature (including Maxim Gorky's short story). It is a sufficiently large expanse to provide room for the Gypsies' wanderings, and it has been regularly used in Russian literature as a metaphor for the free Gypsy (and later Russian) soul. The time-frame of the film is established as the turn of the 20th century, thus completing the removal of the action from contemporary reality in both time and space.

Although made behind the Iron Curtain, the film shares similarities with Hollywood films in its engagement with a source text, as well as in the construction of Gypsy characters (Dobreva 2009).

Despite the tragic aspects of the story, the Gypsies from *Tabor ukhodit v Nebo* are structurally cheerful, radiant, very decorative, and they seem to highly enjoy life, despite the aversion of the authorities which are strongly challenged and sometimes mocked. The film distinguishes itself by certain artistic qualities as the use of frame and the use of music, although the latter is part of the director's quest for authenticity, a quest that ultimately fails.

Ko to tamo peva? / Who's That Singing Over There? **(Slobodan Sijan, 1980)**

Slobodan Šijan's 1980 film *Ko to tamo peva? / Who's That Singing Over There?* is one of the most popular, easily recognizable, and often quoted Serbian films of all

times. Set in the economically underdeveloped, pre – World War Two Serbia, and strongly influenced by the conventions of Hollywood cinema (Levi 2007), the film immediately acquired after its premiere the status of a cult film among the younger generation.

Ko to tamo peva? is basically a road movie with a "ship-of-fools scenario" (Mijić 2013 p. 115) whose action takes place just before the fatal day of April 6 1941 when Nazi Germany launched its savage bombing attack on Belgrade under the code name "Operation Punishment". Several colorful characters epitomizing different social groups in interwar Yugoslavia attempt to make a journey from a small provincial town to the capital. They are embarking in an old and dilapidated bus and although the distance to Belgrade is only one hundred kilometers, it takes them two full days to make the journey. In addition, they are delayed for other various reasons, such as army maneuvers or a collapsing bridge. The characters are: an unskillful hunter from Belgrade returning from a hunting trip, a young married couple eager to consummate their nuptials at every opportunity, a village official dressed in black who is a Nazi sympathizer, an old Serbian soldier, a tubercular man, a local singer on his way to Belgrade for an audition, the bus conductor and his not-very-bright son who drives the bus, and two Gypsy singers – a man and a young boy. The trip is filled with comic, sometimes farcical episodes in which all of the characters reveal their motivations for going to Belgrade. As the journey progresses, hostilities between the passengers intensify. The tone of the film turns darker when the bus finally arrives in Belgrade. The two Gypsies are accused of stealing a

wallet, and are beaten by the other passengers although they are innocent. The film ends with the Nazi bombs falling on the bus and destroying it along with all its passengers with the exception of the two Gypsies who stand on the rubble singing.

The intention of the film is to offer a concise portrait of interwar Yugoslavia by capturing and satirizing the primitive conditions of the times, the backward provincialism, the inefficiency of the Yugoslav army, and the passengers' frivolous quarrels and concerns. However, the cinematic portrait is palliated by a humanistic approach fueled by tolerance, and sharp satire blends with nostalgia for a time past, a decaying epoch that is coming to a sad end (Goulding 2002).

Without being a Gypsy film in the true of the word since the director's intention was not to make a film only about Gypsies, *Ko to tamo peva?* represents in my opinion an important and influential step in Gypsy representation on screen.

The film is one of the few that unambiguously asserts that the Gypsies are not criminals. The two Gypsy characters never steal, cheat, or kill. Instead, they survive despite the difficulties they encounter and the ending is extremely important on that point, offering a step away from the criminalization of the Roma so often portrayed in cinematic texts.

But in spite of this essentially different approach, the director doesn't avoid stereotypical representation of Roma. Once again the Gypsies are associated with wandering, as in the vast majority of Gypsy movies that use this motive, even when they

focus on sedentary communities. Gradually, we find the other passengers' reasons for travelling to Belgrade, but not those of the Gypsies. They just travel. However, the Gypsy wanderer is basically an instrumental stereotype in this film, leading to another one, which is the Gypsy as a story teller and is essential for the understanding of Gypsies' position in this film.

Throughout the entire film, the Gypsies are hardly allowed to speak for themselves. The father says a few words in response to music requests made by the other passengers but his son (about ten years of age) never speaks. Also, the two never initiate any contact with the other characters. The passengers, however, make numerous comments about them, beginning with the Nazi sympathizer complaining about having to travel with Gypsies and resorting to physical violence after the passengers become convinced that the two are thieves. The only way in which the Gypsies express themselves is through performance. The film opens with the two singing about the upcoming journey, with the father playing the accordion, and the son accompanying him on a *drombulja* (a mouth harp also called *guimbarde*). The song is performed three more times, including at the end of the film. While the words change depending on the plot development, the chorus line – "if only it had all been a dream" – remains constant throughout the film[7]. This performance, similar to that of a Greek chorus (Dobreva 2009),

[7] *I'm miserable*
I was born that way
I sing, to sing away my pain
How I wish, mother dear, that
This life had been only but a dream.
From the beginning of the film, this song gives the entire story a characteristic tone of tragi-comedy.

since it comments on the developing action and alludes to future events, remains the defining feature of the two characters. This is, in fact, the reason the Gypsies survive: to make the story known to the world[8]. They are portrayed as excellent musicians who are able to reach people's sensitivity through their songs, but who are perceived as inferior and criminal by everyone else.

Visually, the two Gypsies are represented in a manner similar to that depicted in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*. They look disheveled and they wear dirty clothes; the boy has a suit that is too big for him. They are thus contrasted with the other passengers whom clothes are clean and neat. As in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, the camera focuses at the beginning of the film on the boy smoking, before he throws out the cigarette butt and begins to sing. Therefore the film emphasizes from the beginning the exoticism of poverty, and of the strangeness of the Gypsies who behave improperly starting with an early age. Besides that, the image of the smoking boy is the only reversed stereotype I could identify throughout the film.

Ko to tamo peva? is a dark comedy that echoes strongly in the work of other directors dealing with Roma's fate, and especially in that of Emir Kusturica[9]. Although the treatment of Roma can be characterized as sympathetic in this film, it is also made very clear that Roma are treated by the society as outsiders, as those who are among Us,

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[8] The end of the film is quite problematic in my opinion, because it contradicts the reality: Roma were prime targets of Nazi genocide and they suffered enormously during the Second World War, and still, they are the only survivors in Sijan's film.

[9] In the first part of *Dom za vesanje*, Perhan is similarly using his accordion in order to provide the audience with a musical comment of the events.

but are not Us. Similarly to the cases of other Yugoslav directors (Petrovic, Kusturica), even if the film's attitude toward Roma is benevolent, it seems difficult for the director to avoid existing stereotypes, as the inherent relationship of dominance and submission are often confirmed, even if unintentionally. Overall, the film limits the social role of the Gypsies to that of poor and naive musicians who cannot sustain a productive role in society and prefer to wander around and spread the stories of the people they met.

Dom za vesanje / Time of the Gypsies Gypsies (Emir Kusturica, 1988)

> … Time of the Gypsies is a massive rock of meanings, an open metaphor, one gigantic, disconnected sign. There is too much of everything… A rich baroque film, spilling over on all sides (Zecevic 1993) p: 196)

Time of the Gypsies is probably the best known film pertaining to Gypsy cinema. Based on an original script by Yugoslavia's leading scenarist Gordan Mihić, the film won for Kusturica the best director's award at the 1989 Cannes film festival.

The idea for the film came from Kusturica, who was impressed by an article about the illegal trafficking of Gypsy children over the Italian border, one of the top media stories in Yugoslavia at the time. In a Skopje prison Kusturica had the chance to talk extensively with a young Gypsy, stories of whose life in Italy he also used. Rajko Djuric, a well-known Romani writer, politician, and academic, acted as consultant.

Kusturica's interest in the topic it is obviously not unique in the Balkan context and the Gypsy theme has been prominent in the cinema of Yugoslavia. Actually, Kusturica and another director, Goran Paskaljevic, started to work on similar projects at almost the same time, but Kusturica had a significantly higher budget, being supported by Columbia Pictures David Puttman who also guaranteed the distribution in US. Therefore he had the luxury of spending more time (8 months of pre-production and 9 months of shooting) and resources in making his film.

A variety of locations were used. The set for the Gypsy ghetto was built in the vicinity of Sutka, a Romani neighborhood near the Macedonian capital of Skopje[10]. Two assistants travelled around the country and took photographs of Roma and a select few were interviewed. Kusturica looked for energetic amateur actors and his quest ended with the discovery of Ljubica Adzovic, who played the grandmother and became a constant presence in his films.

Dom za vesanje is one of the rare films shot almost exclusively in Romani language, thus giving recognition of the Romani culture. It had to be subtitled in every country where it played.

The film has a complex plot and a large number of characters. It opens like Fellini *Amarcord* with a local fool directly addressing the audience. We are taken in the Roma ghetto where Perhan, a Romani teenager with telekinetic abilities lives in a shack with his

[10] Another Gypsy film, found at the border between feature and documentary, *Knjiga rekorda Sutke / The Shutka Book of Records* was made here in 2005 (Manic).

charm-healer grandmother, his crippled sister Danira, and his compulsive gambler uncle. The family survives on a small income from a limestone oven they maintain. The children's mother has died prematurely and their father (a soldier from Slovenia) has never been around. The first part of the film is thematically focused on love, as it follows Perhan's infatuation with a neighbor (Azra), his dream of helping his sister walk again, and his caring for a pet turkey. These efforts end in failure due to the poverty that shadows the main character's experiences. Azra's mother, convinced that her daughter will be able to find a richer suitor, rejects Perhan; the only chance for Danira to recover would be a very expensive surgical procedure in far-away Slovenia; and the pet turkey is eaten by the uncle as an expression of revolt against what he perceives as Perhan's privileged status in the family. From this point on, the protagonist becomes involved with organized crime, at first as an assistant to crime lord Ahmed and, later, on his own. As a consequence, all his actions begin to be motivated by revenge, as he is betrayed by Ahmed who, instead of taking his sister to a hospital, has made her work for the gang as a beggar, and by Azra who carries a child rumored to be his uncle's. In the end Azra dies in childbirth, and Perhan uses his telekinetic powers to kill Ahmed with a fork, which leads to his being gunned down by Ahmed's associates.

The film concludes with a scene from the vigil around Perhan's coffin back home. The family is together and golden coins are placed over Perhan's eyes. The mischievous little boy steals the coins and run away. Even though it ends with a death, the film closes in a playful mood.

In terms of aesthetics, it must be said that Kusturica's film has a beautiful cinematography, which brought a profound change in his style and marked the beginnings of his experimentations with magical realism. Although he followed a linear narrative, the magic realist effect was achieved by the introduction of specific narrative elements (dream sequences, fantastic visions, telekinesis, and levitation) and by increased attention to camera style (complexly staged scenes, long elaborately and choreographed takes) (Iordanova 2003).

The musical score also plays an important part, particularly the choral arrangements of Ederlezi, which enhances the effect of all the key scenes of the film – the lovemaking dream sequence, Azra's labor and death, and Perhan's death.

Also, specific to Kusturica's style is the wide range of cinematic 'make-overs', consisting of taking existing scenes from other films and re-making them in the context of his own. Buňuel, John Ford, Fellini, de Sica, Leone, Tarkovky, Tati, Hanak, and Menzel can all be seen in this film.

The film combines rough realism with fantasy elements. On the one hand there are the realistic depictions of everyday life, as well as a high degree of ethnographic authenticity. We also have realistic characters (the gambling uncle, Azra's ambitious mother, or the unscrupulous and corrupt crime lord Ahmed, making a living in trans-national trafficking). On the other hand, there is the added dimension of magical elements (the charm-healing abilities of the grandmother, Perhan's telekinesis, and restless dreams).

At the time of its release it encountered criticism from Roma in France and elsewhere for recycling all the negative social stereotypes associated with the Gypsies. Other Roma, however, have spoken of it as a truthful depiction of their difficult life experience. The film undoubtedly helped to increase the visibility of the group and effectively emphasized the social issues affecting the Roma in Yugoslavia.

In terms of reversed stereotypes, the film presents a quite large number of them. The domestic quarrel between Azra's mother and her husband is almost a perfect example since abusive language and violence appear on screen in the most humorous manner. Ahmed, the crime lord, is portrayed as a funny crazy man, quite similar to Perhan's uncle, the gambler. Hard drinking has the same cathartic function as in *Skupljaci Perja*. The list of scenes involving reversed stereotypes is long, but unlike other directors, Kusturica transformed them in his own characteristic, a situational comedy that is charming and disturbing, at the same time.

Kusturica said that the Gypsies were "inclined to associate the most important moments of their lives with the collective unconsciousness" and this is why he felt it appropriate that their experiences should be "expressed through their dreams and imagination" (Kusturica 1990) p.6). Such views, however, put him in the range of those writers and directors who have created and maintained the romanticized image of the Gyspsy. No matter how beautiful the cinematography or how complex the mise-en-scène of the film may be, he continues to characterize Gypsies as exotic beings who are trying to escape the reality. In this sense Kusturica's approach is similar to that of the other

major Yugoslav director of Gypsy themes, Aleksandar Petrović. Like him, he believes that the Romani experience is characterized by a frame of reference that transcends concrete social frameworks and ultimately dwells in a fantasy world. Thus, he also subscribes to the widely spread belief that Roma are people without a sense of history who live in a timeless universe.

In fact, many elements of earlier Romani films were recycled in *Dom za vesanje*: the geese wandered in from A. Petrović's *Skupljaci Perja* (1967), the Roma celebrating St George's Day in the water – from Stole Popv's documentary *Dae* (1979), the accordion-playing Romani – from Slobodan Sijan's *Ko to tamo peva* (1980), and the little Romani beggars in the Western metropolis – from Goran Paskaljević's *Andejo Cuvar /Guardian Angel* (Paskaljevic 1987).

In this film, Kusturica moves further in the direction of blending veridical film evocations of Gypsy life with magical realism and illusion. His narrative structure is more experimental and poetic in form – influenced in part, by such South American writers as Marquez, Llosa, Cortazar, and Borges (Goulding 2002).

***Gadjo Dillo / The Crazy Stranger* (Tony Gatlif, 1997)**

Tony Gatlif belongs to the generation of filmmakers genuinely concerned with the ostracism suffered by Roma in Eastern Europe. Being himself of Roma origins (he was born in the Algiers suburb of Andalusian Roma) the director tries in his films to maintain

his objectivity, but at the same time he sympathizes with this marginalized minority. His interest in Roma materialized in a generous number of Gypsy films, starting with *Corre gitano* (1981) and continuing with *Canta gitano* (1982), *Les Princes* (1983), *Latcho Drom* (1993), *Mondo* (1995), *Gadjo dilo* (1997), *Je suis né d'une cigogne* (1999), *Vengo* (2000), *Swing* (2002), *Transylvania (2006)*, *Korkoro* (2009). All these films are dealing with different Roma groups (nomads, settled, Andalusian, Manuche, Sinti etc) and cover a large period of time and among them, *Gadjo dilo* is probably the most representative for the Eastern European area.

Shot in Romania and using Romani, French, and Romanian languages, the film presents the story of a young Frenchman (Stéphane) arriving in a Romanian rural Roma community in search of a female singer, Nora Luca. Her songs are recorded on an audiotape inherited from his father, who was also fascinated by her music. As he enters the village on a cold winter day, he encounters Izidor, a Gypsy man whose son was arrested by the Romanian police earlier that day. Izidor is delighted by Stephane's presence and takes him to his modest home, presenting him to his neighbors as the foreigner who wants to learn the Romani language. First, the Gypsy villagers think that a stranger will bring misfortune to their community, but then they slowly accept him. At his turn, Stéphane begins to learn about Gypsy life, language, and customs; as he integrates himself in the community he starts to change fundamentally his ways of thinking and looking at the world. The love story with Sabina, a cheerful young Gypsy from the village, strengthens Stéphane's bonds with the group. His search for Nora Luca

proves unsuccessful and ceases when Stéphane listens to Sabina singing; he realizes then that what he found among these people is equally rewarding in spirit. Progressively Stephane starts to feel and act like a Gypsy and ceases to be considered a crazy stranger (*gadjo dillo)* anymore, although he barely speaks Romani language.

During his career Gatlif repeatedly declared his intention to offer an objective perspective on Roma. In an interview from 1998 he said:

> The more I shot the Gypsies, the more I discovered I didn't know about them. I wanted to put myself in their shoes, so I kept living with them. I wanted to free myself of the nasty look of outsiders, who kept telling me stupid things about Gypsies (Peary 1998).

On another occasion, he referred to the importance of authenticity in his work:

> My camera is authentic because the people I am filming are authentic. I don't play tricks with them; I don't manipulate them. I don't make them feel uncomfortable. The camera is my eye. I am the one behind it, the one they're looking at, not the camera (Radenez 2002 p. 38)

These declarations can be considered the basis of his aesthetics, but what we see on screen doesn't necessarily coincide with his mission statements, as according to the film critics' opinion, to which I adhere, his staging remains subjective (Pasqualino 2008, Gabor 2003, Dobreva 2009).

A close analysis reveals that Gatlif approached the subject matter with a number of preconceived notions.

A first example is Tony Gatlif's relationship to music in the film, which is similar to that of Kusturica. The Gypsies from the village are professional musicians and they are earning their living by performing at local venues. Nora Luca's songs serve as a motif related to the protagonist's quest. The film also features music and dances performed at a

Gypsy wedding, and a dramatic scene of a village burning with a haunting song in the background.

In addition to the music, the film features a number of other representations associating Gypsies with limited social roles similar to those discernible in other Gypsy films. Nomadism emerges as a reference, with shots of an empty road framing the film, and the Gypsies are seen traveling on a number of occasions, even though they belong to a sedentary community. Besides that, the first sign of Stéphane's initiation into Gypsy way of life starts by standing out his torn shoes, a traveler's shoes.

A subplot develops the clichéd love story involving a Romani woman (Sabina) and a non-Romani man (Stéphane), culminating in a love-making scene by a river, highly reflective of classical representations of Gypsy manifestations of passion.

Reversed stereotypes are not missing from Gatlif's intended authentic representation. An example could be Sabina's vulgar language, which seems to be intended as part of her charm and explosive personality. Another one can be detected in the scene showing Izidor, Sabina, and Stéphane returning by car from the town. At some point Izidor seems to feel sick and wants to get out of the car. Sabina goes with him to make sure that he is fine and Izidor implores her to make love to him and then he tries to rape her. The same uncontrollable Gypsy passion surfaces, this time in an ugly manner, but Izidor doesn't get a bad opinion on him. On the contrary, the director tries to inculcate upon us sympathetic feelings: Izidor is not disgusting, but rather a funny old man whom we should pity.

Another reversed stereotype present throughout the entire film is that of use of hard drinking Gypsy. Not only that alcohol is an obligatory element of the Gypsy way of life and an important part of Stéphane's initiation, but its function seems to be, as was already noted about Petrovic and Kusturica's works, to discharge the human being of his deepest fears and dismays. Alcohol is cathartic and seemingly the best way you can find in order to transcend a reality that is sometimes ugly.

The inclusion of a Westerner as a main character of the film is in my opinion an original contribution to the genre of Gypsy cinema. The Gypsies were always perceived as the Other by the dominant populations of different regions, therefore introducing an impartial outsider, a *gadjo*, seems like a good idea in order to enhance the effect of authenticity. The problems arise when we witness Stephane's transformation and the means of his initiation, which are all related to stereotypical representation: music, travel, alcohol, passionate love, all culminating in a total abandonment to a new, free spirited way of life – which is a manifestation of romanticized barbarity in its highest degree.

Another important contribution that Tony Gatlif brings to Gypsy cinema with this film is the direct approach of the tense relationship between Roma and the members of the dominant population, although he was sharply criticized for making a highly politicized film (Dobreva 2009).

Gatlif's career is similar in some ways with that of Emir Kusturica. Both directors' ethnic backgrounds and their appreciation at international festivals play an important role in their decision to make "ethnic films" as they work toward constructing

and projecting a certain image of themselves as filmmakers, engaging critics and audiences (Dobreva 2009). Also, they share the same passion and interest for music, being both musicians.

Often compared with Michael Cacoyannis's Zorba the Greek[11], *Gadjo Dilo* uses the young Frenchman's adventure among the Gypsies and the old theme of the love affair in order to transmit a political message, which is that Roma people should be treated as equal human beings and not as scapegoats. However, it is quite surprising that in his attempt to offer an authentic representation, Tony Gatlif doesn't manage to avoid the stereotypes usually associated with this group.

***Dallas Pashamende/ Dallas among Us* (Robert Adrian Pejo, 2005)**

Dallas Pashamende / Dallas among Us is an Austrian-Hungarian- German coproduction shot on Romanian and Hungarian territory and using Romanian, Hungarian, and Romani languages and actors. The director, Robert Adrian Pejo, was born in Romania, but lives and works now in the United States. The film addresses the issues of a Roma community living in Romania (as it appears from the authorities' language), but the group itself speaks only Hungarian and Romani although the characters' names are Romanian, which is confusing and casts doubt on the problem of authenticity from the very beginning.

[11] Similar to the English writer from Zorba, Stéphane finds at the end of his journey the secret meaning of life: love and a peaceful inner self; besides that, the final scene is strikingly resembling

The international dimension of the production brought also a few other problems concerning the shooting. In September 2003 the film crew built a setting (an artificial garbage damp) on the territory of Brasov Municipality in Romania where the filming would take place. They obtained all necessary permissions, rented an old, deserted mine and erected the garbage dump on it.

The accounts of what happened a few weeks later differ. According to the first version, the district attorney and representatives of the environmental and health authorities visited the set, blamed the crew of abusing their trust, and asked the production to leave the country. According to other reports (which were used heavily in the promotion of the film), a special unit of eighty heavily armed men stopped the shooting without any explanation and kept the filming location under guard until early October, which forced the production to leave Romania (Iordanova 2008). *Sight and Sound* (2004) film magazine offered an even more dramatic version. According to them, Romania's prime minister had sent the army who 'arrived with truckloads and helicopters' to stop the project. Whatever the truth is, the production had to leave Romania and the film was finished in Hungary.

Everything happened in response to media reports saying that the image of the country was deeply affected and the authorities' intervention gained a political dimension since an artificially created setting was meant to stand for Romania and present it as a country full of garbage. The problem wasn't that there are not any real Roma living on

rubbish dumps in Romania, but the intention of the director to create a socially conscious film using artificial methods.

And these artificial methods are at the same time the main characteristic of the film and the biggest problem, because the film aims to deal with the controversial situation of Roma in Eastern Europe by addressing issues like human rights abuses, racism, and poverty, but fails miserably due to its unoriginal approach.

The film's plot is quite linear and saturated with common subplots. The most noticeable contribution comes with the film's protagonist, Radu, who works as a teacher in Romania's capital. He is returning home to arrange for the funeral of his father and makes an impressive appearance with his neat clothes and his decent car in the garbage dump where his childhood house is located. The inhabitants of the bizarre settlement named Dallas live in almost subhuman conditions, without water or electricity, rummaging through the waste for whatever usable thing they could sell to a local mobster that swindles and exploits them. Radu is now a city boy and has a Romanian girlfriend, but after some time spent in Dallas his feelings change. He sympathizes with his fellow-Roma, gets involved in a relationship with the love of his youth, Oana, and decides to stay and help the community by dealing with the mob group and teaching the children to write and read. But his intentions end up in a tragedy when Oana is killed by her former lover, Iancu, one of the few Gypsy cinematic characters ever portrayed in an entirely negative manner. The uncontrollable Gypsy passion triumphs and Roma's fate apparently

cannot be changed. Broken hearted, Radu leaves behind the garbage dump and its shabby inhabitants and returns to Bucharest.

Although Dallas Pashamende seems to be at first sight a film about poverty and the marginalization of Roma, in reality it is more preoccupied with exploiting the legacy of Gypsy exotica. Passionate and tragic love, over-sexualized and free spirited characters, dance and entertainment, the "poor but happy" (Pasqualino 2008) motif, and the list could go on, all can be found in Pejo's film.

The reversed stereotypes are also very well represented. The first example involves the scenes that deal with Radu's car and its gradual disappearance. It seems that Gypsies can't help themselves from stealing the car's components one by one and this act makes them very happy. The scenes are humorous and Gypsies giggle and behave like naughty children; even Radu, who is upset in the beginning, gives up and join the general delight, offering his car as a present to the community. Other scenes show many people consuming exaggerate amounts of alcohol; it is suggested that there is nothing wrong with this habit, on the contrary, that it strengthens the bonds between the members of the group. Alcohol is also a mean of integration for Radu who rediscovers in this manner the pleasure of being among his people. Another example of reversed stereotypes is the case of a "sexually emancipated" Gypsy woman, basically a prostitute, who sells her services for something to eat or a few coins. Although her situation is tragic and humiliating, the scenes that involve her are rather comical and her clients are presented in an almost friendly light.

Besides the large number of stereotypes used in this film, what is most unsettling is the mélange of motifs and imagery absorbed from other films pertaining to Gypsy cinema. From Petrovic's windows' frame, smoking children, and violent domestic fights to Kusturica's drunkers and mobsters, almost everything that was said and shown is present in Pejo's collection, making the film uninteresting to watch.

To conclude, I'll refer to Amit Yahav-Brown who writes that while the heroes and heroines of the novels are highly individualized and characterized with concern for detail and deviation, gypsies are usually stock figures with a one-dimensional and predictable symbolic function (Yahav-Brown 2007 p. 1124). This observation is obviously consistent not only with literature, but also with many features of Gypsy cinema and *Dallas Pashamende* is one of the best examples on this line.

Baklava **(Alexo Petrov, 2007)**

The Bulgarian film *Baklava* is in my opinion a very interesting case since it doesn't fit entirely in the Gypsy cinema mold, but offers nevertheless a fresh and original approach to the Gypsy theme.

The film was directed by Alexo Petrov, a talented and complex young artist (he is not only a film director but also a producer, photographer, editor, scriptwriter) who emigrated in Canada in 2004 and returned to Bulgaria in 2007 with the only goal to shoot his first feature film, which is *Baklava*.

The main characters of the film are two brothers, Djore and Kotze. The last one spent his life in an orphanage, and now he is found by his older brother. Their sudden encounter as a family is the starting point for a long series of adventures. Before the premiere, the story of the film was advertised as it follows:

> Djore is 26, dresses in black, listens to drum & bass and does graffiti. Kotze is 9, wears a silver chain, steals, fights, and loves pop-folk music. In spite of their differences, the brothers hit the road in search of a buried treasure, willed to them by their grandmother. On the way they will meet with unbelievable adventures, unexpected encounters and undiscovered truths (Los Vulgaros 2007).

And indeed, some extraordinary things happen: a bunch of gentlemen in black suits, with ties in different colors, undress and "dance" with a young girl in Bulgarian national dress; a rich man of disgusting appearance takes a walk carrying another man, naked, on a leash; crazy parties involving lots of drugs and alcohol are going on; and kids commit suicide. Also called "a Bulgarian fairy tale" (Los Vulgaros 2007) *Baklava* is in fact a collage of semi-philosophical discussions, dark neighborhoods, funny characters, child's fantasies and bad dreams, meant to make us follow the characters into a journey in Bulgaria's deepest, darkest secrets.

I said that the film doesn't fit necessarily in the Gypsy cinema category, because it isn't primarily a film about Roma; it is a film about the Bulgarian children who live in orphanages or on the streets, and takes aim of the corrupt Bulgarian leadership whose victims are more numerous and diverse. The word "Gypsy" is mentioned only three times, twice when Djore identifies his smaller brother, Gotze, as being an ethnic Roma, and once by a policeman trying to figure out what is the purpose of his job ("Chasing

Gypsies?"). However, throughout the film there are several clues of stereotypical nature that can be related to Roma: the grandmother uses a crystal ball to show Djore where the treasure is, a turtle is considered "like us, a traveler, except that she carries the house on its back", Djore is unfairly insulted at customs when he returns to Bulgaria from Belgium as being into drugs, prostitution or pickpocketing. But what we are witnessing in *Baklava* is, I would argue, an indirect way of addressing the Roma problems, where the guilt is clearly placed here with the politicians who are vulgar, true sinners, involved in large scale dirty businesses, and treating weaker people as pets.

It is arguably if we assist or not to reversed stereotypes since the effect of any possible stereotype is greatly diminished by the scarce references to characters' ethnic background made throughout the film. A good example is the scene when Gotze steals a car and the two brothers have a great time riding it. We encounter the theft motive, so often associated with Roma and generating in this case fun moments of pure satisfaction. Although at first sight it seems a clear example of reversed stereotype, the public may see not necessarily two Gypsies stealing a car, but two young people performing an act of bravery. Almost the same situation is encountered in the scene when Gotze pickpockets a guy in the railway station; the sophisticated montage of the scene makes you think first that Djore resisted taking part in the theft, but later we can see them having a small party and counting the stolen money. Once again, what seems to be a reversed stereotype may also be the director's intention to suggest that kids like Gotze and Djore, drinking, stealing, taking drugs, or aggressing prostitutes, are "products" of indifference and

disastrous social policies, with no ethnic connotations. Moreover, since the approach and general frame of the film are entirely different, no signs of Gipsy exotica or romanticization of barbarity can be detected. An exception may be the grandmother's crystal ball from the beginning of the movie but, in my opinion, its main function is to create a mythical aura for the journey the two brothers are about to take.

An element which highly contributes to impersonal ethnicity in *Baklava* is the editing and the nature of the image in this film. Without any special cinematic qualities and being rather photographic, with many snap-shots and medium to close-ups, the image gives sometimes the impression that the director would only want us to "see" certain things, commissioning the public to complete the puzzles of the story. The effect is sometimes shocking and confusing in accordance with Petrov's intention of rendering the hard hitting reality of a society found adrift.

Even before its release, the film scared politicians, raised debates and became "the most wanted Bulgarian movie". The movie caused a lot of changes in Bulgaria - the deputy director of the State Agency for Child Protection and the head of the home shown in the film have been fired. Special commissions focused on children issues were created, TV shows started to debate on the problems of the Bulgarian "invisible children" and as a result, the government raised the financial support for an abandoned child from $3 to $30 monthly (Los Vulgaros 2007).

Screened at several international film festivals including a Roma film festival in Amsterdam focused on Roma human rights, *Baklava* was banned in Bulgaria under

accusations of containing scenes promoting drug use, pornography, and homosexuality. The scandal generated led to an investigation of the Bulgarian government, a trial and the sentence of Alexo Petrov in absentia. The director hasn't return to Bulgaria to this day. At the peak of the scandal he wrote an open letter to the media and institutions where he said:

> "I went back in Bulgaria with good intentions, with open eyes. But the real life nightmare is not a fiction. Most of us cannot or just do not want to see the terrifying reality. The film at some point it is maybe entertaining, shocking or even it makes people blush, but at least it shows what is really going on in Bulgaria. On the street, in our concrete apartments, at bus stations, on TV, at the overcrowded stadiums during pop folk concerts, at the bars, in the orphanages and children's care homes… What is happening to BULGARIAN KIDS ON OUR STREETS is much more terrifying than what is shown in the movie. The extermination of all moral values makes us go away and search for happiness in temporary and easily gained spaces" (Los Vulgaros 2007).

I found Alexo Petrov's *Baklava* similar to a certain extent to Robert Adrian Pejo's *Dallas Pashamende,* in a way that both Dan and Djore's characters represent alternatives to the classical roles attributed to Roma by mainstream society (Dan as a professor and Djore as a graphic artist). But while the presence of this alternative seems to be Pejo's most significant contribution to the genre, Petrov takes it to a different, more subtle and complex level. Besides that, Pejo's character is situated in a context highly tributary to all the conventions existing in Gypsy film genre, while Alexo Petrov manages to address the issue in a distinct and powerful piece of cinema.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze how the cinematic representation of Roma evolved over time by arguing that Roma are in general positively portrayed in Eastern European cinema. The thesis also introduced a new concept, that of reversed stereotype, which I considered an essential tool in positive stereotyping representation of Roma on screen.

The production of Gypsy films in the countries of Eastern Europe was examined from a historical point of view within the framework of the national cinema traditions, and particularly in their relation to state ideology. Assuming that linking the cultural changes to the films can reveal a lot about the films itself, the people that made them and the expectations of a society at a given moment, I identified several causes for consistent positive and stereotypical representation. One possible reason is that rather than being given chance to portray themselves, the Roma people have been usually depicted by others. Other reasons include the influence of American Gypsy representation, the phenomenon of "projective identification" experienced by the members of the dominant group correlated with a form of Orientalism (Nesting Balkanism), but also the attempt to romanticize the "barbaric" features of this Eastern European population. The image of the Roma in the nationalist discourse throughout the region and the lack of any political power were identified as other possible causes.

Looking closely at the Gypsy cinema from a historical point of view, it became obvious that it generally followed the same stylistic and conceptual tendencies existing in Eastern European cinema and evolved from the propaganda inflected plots of socialist realism to a mix of romanticism and neorealism in present-day cinema.

The methodology I used for this thesis in order to achieve my purpose was content analysis performed on seven films that covered a range of years from 1966 to 2007, in order to monitor the changes in certain key aspects of exoticisation and stereotypical representation. The elements I focused on were the complexity of the plot, the manner in which main characters are depicted, the stereotypical situations involving these characters, and the whole films' assessments in comparison to the others.

Most of the films I analyzed (*Skupljaci Perja*, *Ko to tamo peva?, Gadjo Dilo*, *Time of the Gypsies*) contributed to the development of a more tolerant attitude within the dominant population. Others, like *Tabor ukhodit v nebo* or *Dallas Pashamende* mainly reiterated and emphasized the most common stereotypes associated with Roma. An exception was offered by the Bulgarian film *Baklava* that offered an original and fresh perspective on Roma representation, almost free of stereotypes and exotic elements. It is also noticeable that Roma are more often present in the cinema of former Yugoslavia which can be considered the core region of Gypsy cinema. The most influential and innovative representations came from there and the directors that created Gypsy movies within this space clearly influenced each other, making important personal and artistic

statements at the same time. If a Gypsy cinema school would have existed, its founders would have been the Yugoslav directors and its aesthetics would have originated there.

The reversed stereotypes I focused on for the purpose of this paper were generously featured in most of the films, with the exception of *Ko to tamo peva?* and *Baklava*, where they were less present.

Personal Opinions

Although I highly appreciate the valuable contributions of filmmakers such as Emir Kusturica or Slobodan Sijan, I consider that Gypsy cinema is in great need for more authentic representations and a fresher approach to Gypsy themes, one that would be liberated from the traditional point of view on this matter and the inherent presence of stereotypes. I also believe that Alexo Petro's nonconformist film *Baklava*, even though it failed to reach a large audience and remains relatively unknown, represents an important step in this direction. In the same line, movies about Roma intellectuals and achievers would contribute more to the realistic image of this minority. An attempt was made with the film *Dallas Pashamende*; the director's intention was admirable and courageous in my opinion, but it wasn't enough to make a relevant change in representation; on the contrary, the large amount of stereotypes Robert Alexander Anjou chose to include in his film, minimalized its effect and made the film to fail its purpose of authenticity.

I also consider potentially useful the completion of an inventory of stereotypes usually associated with Roma, similar to what Donald Bogle (1973) has done in his book about African Americans' representation in cinema. Writing about Roma stereotypes and interpreting the films that features them would definitely help to avoid them or integrate them at a different level.

Conclusions and Implications

Whether or not the two tendencies (rough realism and exoticism) present in today Gypsy cinema will continue to co-exist, an unbiased attitude toward Roma within the Eastern European nationalist discourse and an improvement of their social status together with an increased active participation in their own cultural life could equilibrate the situation and contribute to the elimination of different kind of stereotypes.

The cinema can constitute a place where the conflicting ethnic groups could meet at a virtual level and a process of change could be initiated. Besides that, film has the power to create an artistic space where respect for essential values like dignity, solidarity, and equality can be learned and assumed by both Roma and dominant populations.

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